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Campbell's Commercial Correspondence

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Campbell's Commercial Correspondence

The Art of Modern
Business Letter Writing

By

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CITIZEN PRINT SHOP
Los Angeles

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PREFACE

This book was evolved from my lectures in correspondence. The failure of much commercial correspondence to accomplish any definite result is made more conspicuous by a careful study of really efficient work in that line. The need of some book which would bring out some of the common faults and which would show some of the common remedies, seemed essential in conducting successful classes in business correspondence.

The material for the book was gathered from far and wide. Good ideas, that came from letters themselves, or poor ideas, which seem to be far more numerous, were selected and analyzed from time to time, until the definite plan of the book took shape. The emphasis upon the sales letter is made for two reasons. First, the sales letter is becoming a more important factor in American business than ever before. Second, the sales letter requires much greater thought, much clearer expression, and much more forceful emphasis than does the ordinary routine letter. If the student can be taught to write a successful sales letter, no phase of commercial correspondence will prove difficult.

The value of teaching correspondence can hardly be overestimated. The average student detests writing the English language. Composition, rhetoric and the various allied subjects seldom arouse any great interest in any but the exceptional student.

Business correspondence, because it is particularly practical, is studied with a great deal of interest by students who formerly had almost an antipathy for any form of composition. The value of interesting the student in any subject is perfectly

obvious. The value of teaching a subject which interests and which offers a field which is far more comprehensive than it at first seems, is of course doubly valuable.

The writer wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the many little pamphlets issued by the B. F. Goodrich Co. These little booklets are practical and purposeful. They are indeed the forerunners of a real change in the methods of commercial correspondence. I also wish to express my gratitude to Mr. J. E. Owen and to Mr. C. Weston Clark for the many helpful criticisms which they have proffered at all times. To every one whose helpful criticism has improved the book, the author is deeply indebted. To the young stenographers who have so capably taken and transcribed the notes of this first edition I am very grateful.

H. DEAN CAMPBELL.

Los Angeles, California, May 1, 1918.

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Campbell's Commercial Correspondence

Chapter I

INTRODUCTORY

Business Letters Important

The success of the modern business depends to a great extent upon its correspondence. In many businesses the sole contact with the outside business world is made by means of the business letter. Many companies depend entirely for new business upon sales letters. Railroads and large corporations resort to the business letter to establish communication between the various branches of their widely scattered divisions. The business letter plays almost as important a part in the average business as does the telephone.

Letter Writing Must Be Taught

A great proportion of the business men of today received their elementary training in business schools. The burden of preparing men and women to carry on the important function of correspondence, rests upon the business school, therefore. Unfortunately the business school has not always taken the lead in introducing modern ideas into its courses in correspondence. Rather, business men, having found their equipment wholly lacking when confronted with actual prob-

lems in correspondence, have gradually changed their ideas and their methods for writing letters. The business student must be taught modern methods in correspondence to meet the needs of a modern business age.

It is the duty of the business school to prepare students for work, not in a theoretical manner, but in a practical one. To use a trite expression, the business school graduates of today are the business men and women of tomorrow. Obviously, the business school must take the lead and thoroughly equip its students in every department of modern business practice. The study of correspondence is a necessary part of all business training.

WILL THE LETTER GET RESULTS?

This book is designed especially for use in schools which aim to make their students better business correspondents. It is unreasonable to suppose that if business has made progress in the last twenty years the methods used in correspondence twenty years ago would suffice today. The needs for result getting letters, and the various methods of getting these results, will be discussed in the chapters that are to follow.

Every Letter Has a Basic Idea

Back of every letter that is written, there will always be one fundamental idea that the writer wishes to convey. The success or failure of any letter, therefore, will depend entirely upon whether that idea is successfully transmitted. A conspicuous failure of many so-called Business Correspondence Texts has been the fact that the excellence of the various specimens contained, was judged solely upon whether or not they were actual letters. Many writers have believed that if a letter were sent through the mails by a business firm of standing, that that made it a good business letter.

Will the Letter Bring Results It is not the contention that every letter in this text-book has been sent through the mails. A great many of them have been tried out and have proved to be successful, result-getting letters. The real basis for judging any letter, however, must always be: Will this bring results? That must be the inevitable test of every business letter.

THE LETTER WRITER'S REQUIREMENTS

Study of Composition Should Be Made Proper training for writing letters is important. Any attempt to take up the study of modern business correspondence without a thorough preparation in the fundamental principles which underlie all composition, is likely to result in failure. This text-book is not designed as a course in business English. It is expected that the principles of English and of English Grammar have been mastered before the student takes up the study of the business letter. A working knowledge of grammar and of composition or rhetoric is necessary. The principles of unity, emphasis, and coherence should be well in hand before proceeding with the study of letters.

Common Sense the Governing Rule Letter-writing is not difficult. Its principles are chiefly those of common sense. While grammar and composition are important, the student will do well to remember that grammar and composition are simply means to an end. A thorough knowledge of all the rules that one might find in an English Grammar will avail nothing unless the student appreciates the fact that all rules are intended for a purpose. That purpose is the ability to express oneself with force and conciseness. The principles of composition—unity, coherence, and

emphasis, are also intended not as an end in themselves, but as a means toward a greater end—the ability to write well. The rules of grammar will save the student from glaring errors. The principles of composition will save the student from rambling, purposeless, and ineffective discourse.

Letter a Substitute for the Personal Interview

Letters must be something besides specimens of either composition or grammar, however. As has been suggested before, the question of results is always the final test. It will be seen that the ordinary letter may conform to all the known rules of composition and still fail. The real difficulty will sometimes be seen to be a lack in a more or less intangible quality known as personality. The failure of a great many letters lies in the fact that they are nothing but letters. Successful letter-writers are always those whose letters, while perfect in form, contain something of themselves. The writer should always remember that in so far as possible, his letter is aimed to take the place of a personal interview. Otherwise it would not be written. To show how this may be done will be the object of this text.

Chapter II

THE LETTER FORM

Letters Have Set Forms

While we shall endeavor to avoid stereotyped language in our business letters, the mechanical make-up of the letter, with but one or two variations, has remained much the same for the last quarter of a century. Perhaps it is well to recognize that the set form of a letter is not without its value. Business men have become accustomed to one particular type of letter, and a letter which varies too much from this standard type detracts from, rather than adds to its value.

BLOCK AND MILITARY FORMS

Block Forms Not Recommended

Block forms are undoubtedly very artistic, but general appearance cannot always be considered to any great extent. Block forms originated, because, from the stenographers' viewpoint, they were very convenient. But block forms are fast being discarded. The main reason for this is probably the fact that they are not so easily read. From earliest childhood we have been accustomed to recognize paragraphs by an indentation. It is the signal for which we watch in everything that we read. Because a universal change in the form of the paragraph in all reading matter, whether books or stories, would have been too revolutionary, the block form has not taken a very firm hold on the business world. In the last year the percentage of blocked forms has decreased remarkably.

Johnson & James Co.
415 Front Street
Chicago, Illinois

Gentlemen:

I regret that I must again call your attention to the unsatisfactory results that my customers have had with your XXX House Paint.

There seems to be a general complaint that the paint spreads very hard, and that after it has been exposed to the sun, it shows numerous blisters; in some cases it has peeled off. I have investigated the matter very carefully myself, and know that the complaints are well founded.

In quite a few cases, I have been compelled to furnish other products, and to stand the expense of having the work done over. This is not profitable business. It does not increase my reputation for handling goods of the best quality.

Unless you can give me some assurance of a marked improvement in the quality of this paint, it will be necessary for me to cancel all orders for future shipment.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 1

This illustrates a blocked form. Sometimes, for advertising letters, or letters which are intended to be somewhat novel in appearance, this form can be used.

It is, of course, a time saver for the stenographer, but because it is somewhat more difficult to read, it is not recommended for every day use in an office.

If it is used, however, notice that the block idea should be carried out consistently, so that there are no indentations at all. The paragraphs are shown by the double spaces.

Combinations of the old form and the new block type should be rarely used. If the blocked idea is to be used, it should be carried out consistently. In the illustration shown, we have a specimen of a thoroughly blocked letter. It is not recommended for every-day business correspondence.

Military Form War has brought out another form which is likely to be used a great deal in the future. It is not a new idea, because several large corporations have used it for some time. Many writers have felt a need for some statement that would give an idea of the contents of a letter without the necessity of reading the letter completely. This can be accomplished very neatly by placing the subject of the letter before the complimentary address, or rather as a part of the complimentary address. In the accompanying illustration we have the type commonly used by the Government today, especially in the War Department. It enables the reader to see at a glance what the letter is about without the necessity of carefully reading the contents.

THE PARTS OF A LETTER

The different parts of a letter should be studied with care, because each has its own particular function. A letter can be roughly divided into six main divisions:

1. Heading
2. Complimentary Address.
3. Salutation.
4. Body.
5. Complimentary Close.
6. Signature.

Most business firms, of course, have the heading of the letter printed upon their stationery. It may contain not only

the name and address of the firm, but any information as may be deemed advisable to include. The date, of course, must always be inserted by the stenographer. If more than one sheet is required for a letter, a "second sheet" without the printed letter head should be used.

The complimentary address is important. It is much the same as the address which appears on the envelope. It contains:

1. The name of the person to whom the letter is addressed.
2. The address to which the letter is sent.

From: Office, Aviation Examining Board, Los Angeles, Cal.

To: Bert L. Packer

Subject: Application for staff Commissions in Branches of the Army other than the Signal Corps

1. You are advised that flying candidates of draft age, on inactive duty, cannot apply for staff commissions in any branch of the army other than the Signal Corps without first obtaining their discharge from the Aviation Section of the Signal Enlisted Reserve Corps.

Captain, S.R.C., A.S.
President

Specimen Letter No. 2

This illustrates the form of letter used in government military correspondence. It has the advantage of having an outline of the whole letter at the beginning. This eliminates the necessity of reading the letter before ascertaining its contents. The application of this idea will be discussed later in the chapter on the detail letter.

It will be noticed that there is no salutation included. The reason for this is that this is an actual reproduction. It was addressed to the writer with the rank of private. The military Sir is therefore omitted, as the letter was written by a commissioned officer.

It is important that a man should always be addressed as nearly as possible as he signs his name. The complimentary address is usually written in three lines, and it is well to note that even in quite lengthy addresses, more than four lines should never be used.

421 South Pepper Street
Los Angeles, Calif.
Dec. 21, 1918

National Pecan Growers' Exchange
Dallas, Texas

Gentlemen:

Please give us your quotations on pecans, shelled and unshelled, and send samples. When quoting, please include our brokerage.

We have several prospective buyers, and we think we could sell a car or two for you.

Yours truly,

JOHNSON BROS.
General Commission Brokers

By--

H. G. Meyers:AC

Specimen Letter No. 3

This letter illustrates two things. It will be noticed that the signature is typed out in the lower left hand corner. This idea is of

great value to the reader, when it happens that the writer's signature is somewhat illegible. When the correspondence is between two strangers, it makes it unnecessary for the reader to decipher an illegible signature and insures that the reply will be directed to the proper person.

Notice also that this is written on paper which has no letter head. The address, the city, the state, and the date, must be typed in by the stenographer. Notice the even indentation of both the heading and the complimentary address.

The commas at the ends of lines have also been omitted.

Correct Title Should Be Used

The use of a man's correct title is important. The most common title will be for the average person, Mr., Mrs., or Miss, as the case may be. A Doctor of Medicine may be addressed as Dr., or his name may be written with the proper degree following, as: James H. James, M. D. It the latter title is used, then the title of Dr. preceding the name must be omitted. The following are some of the commonly used degrees:

Doctor of Philosophy.... Ph. D.
Doctor of Medicine..... M. D.
Doctor of Laws..... LL. D.
Doctor Dental Surgery.. D. D. S.

The degree, B. A., because it is so common, is seldom used. An attorney is usually addressed as Esquire, abbreviated to Esq., after the name. Such titles as Reverend, Honorable, or Captain, should not be abbreviated, although they commonly appear abbreviated in newspapers and elsewhere. The title Professor, should be applied, not to school teachers in general, but to those whose standing in collegiate circles gives them that title.

The salutation is another form to which we must adhere. There has never been found a better way of opening a letter than by the trite Dear Sir or My dear Sir. Although such

salutations are comparatively meaningless, it is necessary to adhere to them very strictly.

My dear Sir More Formal The most common form of salutation is Dear Sir; Gentlemen is used if more than one man is addressed; Dear Madam or Mesdames is used if the letter is addressed to one or more ladies respectively. Contrary to general opinion, the salution, My dear Sir, is more formal than Dear Sir; so that arranged in the order of their formality, we have: Sir, My dear Sir, Dear Sir, and Dear Mr. Jones. Sir is practically obsolete except in government or military correspondence, where it is still used with propriety, especially in letters of more or less formal or military character.

Mrs. James Farley

221 West 6th St.

Los Angeles, Cal.

Specimen No. 4

This is the block type of address. It is a time saver for the stenographer, but like the block form of letter is not recommended. If the block type is used, however, the blocked idea should be carried out on the envelope like this.

Mr. M. A. Manning
Riverside
California

Specimen No. 5

This is the common form of indentation to be used where no street address is given. The indentation is five spaces, but may be increased if necessary, providing the indentations are the same throughout.

Firms composed of both men and women, are usually addressed as Gentlemen.

Close Corresponds With Salutation

It is important that the complimentary closing should correspond in formality with the salutation. If Sir has been used, Yours respectfully should be found as the complimentary close. Such a close is seldom found anywhere else. The forms: Yours truly, Truly yours, Very truly yours, or Yours very truly, may be used with either Dear Sir or My dear Sir, or with Gentlemen, Dear Madam, or Mesdames. Cordially yours, Yours sincerely, Most sincerely yours, Yours most sincerely, are usually found when the name of the man addressed appears in the salutation, as Dear Mr. Jones. Such

closings are also used when the letter is extremely informal or friendly in character.

All of these different forms are, of course, quite meaningless. We adhere to them simply because no better way of beginning or closing a letter has been found.

Signature Should be Legible The signature should be legible. A well-written signature is a courtesy which every reader of a business letter has a right to demand. The slovenly, illegible signature is one which does as much as anything else to discredit an otherwise well-written letter. A clear, forceful signature adds character to the letter.

Mr. Harold James
Coalinga
California
468 Sunset Ave.

Specimen No. 6

This style is the one recommended by the United States Government for ordinary correspondence in which a street address must be included. This is placed in the lower left hand corner as shown.

The commas at the ends of lines have been omitted in all the addresses because the commas are not necessary to make the matter clear. It is not necessary to include them. The general effect of the address is better without the commas.

E. R. SHRADER, President
C. WESTON CLARK, Secy.
J. E. OWEN, Business Mgr.
LOUISE THILL, Registrar
TELEPHONES:
MAIN 3286
F 2100
A 60434

Los Angeles Business College

INCORPORATED 1890

327 WEST EIGHTH ST. AT HILL ST. LOS ANGELES

(HEALD'S)

AFFILIATED WITH HEALD'S BUSINESS COLLEGES

AGENTS OF THE STENOTYPE COMPANY

April 19, 1918

Mr. R. M. Young, Principal
Young's Business School
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Mr. Young:

This letter will introduce Mr. James King, who is looking for a position as instructor in your Bookkeeping Department.

Mr. King has had a long and successful experience in this work with the business colleges of the Southwest. During the past three years, he has had charge of our Bookkeeping Department and his work has proved highly satisfactory. I can vouch for his integrity and ability in all branches of commercial work.

I shall consider it a personal favor if you can help him in any way.

Yours sincerely,

R. S. Jones

Specimen Letter No. 7

This shows a letter correctly placed on a letter head. The date is the only thing in the heading that must be put in by the stenographer. Care in placing a letter increases its general appearance. Letters which are not well placed call attention to this fault, and thus detract from their effectiveness.

A legible signature is a valuable addition to any letter.

Many men have a signature which is naturally hard to read. In such cases it is a very excellent idea to include the full name of the dictator, instead of his initials, in the lower left-hand corner. When the correspondent is a stranger, this avoids the possibility of confusion and also establishes the identity of the writer. Notice how this is done in the specimen letter No. 3.

THE ENVELOPE

The envelope should be addressed in such a way as to insure its arrival at the proper destination. Like the complimentary address, it should contain the name and title of the person addressed, the street and number of his residence or place of business, and the city and state. The address should never contain more than three lines; if additional information is necessary, it is usually placed in the lower left hand corner of the envelope. The name of the State should not be on the same line as the name of the city. By placing the Street address in the lower left hand corner, it is usually possible to avoid placing the name of the state in the same line with the name of the city.

The three specimen envelopes illustrate the most acceptable types for addressing envelopes. The style should be the same as for the complimentary address in the letter.

Indentation Should be Regular As in the letter, the block type may save a few seconds for the stenographer, but it is doubtful if this type is an improvement upon the properly indented form. The indentation should be regular, usually about five spaces on the typewriter, without regard to the end of the line.

Commas Omitted at Ends of Lines

It will be noted in the specimen letter that the commas at the ends of lines in the heading and complimentary address have been entirely omitted. The commas have also been omitted on the envelope. There are two reasons for this. In the first place, commas should be used to make the reading more clear, and certainly they are not necessary for this purpose in these places. In the second place, time is saved by their omission, because the number of strokes on the typewriter thus saved by a busy stenographer is countless.

Neat Make-up Important

The mechanical make-up of a letter, of course, will depend a great deal upon the stenographer. Any rules which are offered must be regarded not as infallible guides to form, but rather suggestions which may perhaps have to be modified from time to time. Let it be remembered that the success of the letter in a large measure, depends upon its appearance. The slovenly letter has no place in the correspondence of today. Neatness, carefulness in punctuation, in spelling, in grammar, are factors which are entirely within the control of the stenographer.

The arrangement of the letter on the page must necessarily be left to the stenographer. Any arrangement which presents the best appearance as a whole, is the best arrangement. Margins, with the letter carefully placed on the page are essential. Never must the stenographer fail to adjust the size of the letter to the page. Letters which are too close to the top, or too close to the bottom, are annoying to the reader.

Specimen letter No. 7, contained in this chapter, should be studied with care. Each of the six different parts of the letter are well illustrated. While, because of their varying size, all letters cannot be similarly placed, note the balance of the letter on the page. Note the omission of the commas

at the ends of the lines in the complimentary address; and notice that the complimentary close corresponds in form with the salutation. A weakness in any of the parts of a letter means a weakness in the letter as a whole.

Chapter III

PLANNING THE LETTER

Must be Planned

Good letters are not written by accident. They are the result of definite plans. Each letter has its fundamental purpose; it must be planned with that fundamental idea always in mind. The sales letter must sell goods; the collection letter must collect money; the letter of application must get a position. The careless letter is not likely to achieve any of these results.

There are four general characteristics of a well planned letter. In the first place it is well begun; in the second place it is clear; in the third place it is concise; and in the fourth place it is well ended.

The Paragraph

The paragraph is the greatest aid that the writer of a well planned letter can have. It serves two widely different purposes. In the first place a letter which is divided into paragraphs presents a much more pleasing appearance than does the letter which is not indented. Since the appearance of any letter depends upon the arrangement of its paragraphs, typographical composition of a letter cannot be given too much attention. Too many short paragraphs or a combination of extremely long and extremely short paragraphs is to be avoided.

In the second place, the paragraph is the signal that a new idea is being taken up. Originally, of course, the paragraph was indented to make the reading easier, as the indentation afforded a momentary rest for the eye. Naturally enough, it

became customary to make separate paragraphs complete compositions in themselves.

The writer must not forget, however, that although each paragraph is developing its own idea, it must be an idea which contributes to the fundamental idea of the letter as a whole. The paragraph must be devoted to one idea, but that one idea must be an integral part of the letter.

Paragraph Must be a Unit

The paragraph must be developed in a logical order. It should have a topic sentence which conveys in a general way the idea which the paragraph is trying to develop. The sentences must be arranged logically and naturally, so that the paragraph is clear, well balanced and forcible. If this is done, the common occurrence of finding two ideas, somewhat separated in thought, in the same paragraph, will be avoided. If these ideas are vital to the success of the letter as a whole, they should be treated in separate paragraphs.

A letter should be planned by paragraphs. The failure of most letters is not so much that the writer does not have his ideas fairly in mind, but rather that he does not have his ideas so arranged that he can present them in the most logical and forceful manner. A careful consideration of the things that one wishes to say is helpful. A proper arrangement of those ideas is vitally necessary.

A great aid in writing effective business letters is never to attempt to write too many things in one letter. If one has two important things to say, the best rule is to write two letters.

The paragraphs are, therefore, the foundation blocks of a letter. Misplace one and the whole structure is likely to crumble. They play an important part in producing a letter which is well begun, which is clear and concise, and which is well ended.

THE BEGINNING OF THE LETTER

First Paragraph Important

The beginning and ending of a letter, as well as clearness and conciseness, depend upon a logical and natural arrangement of the paragraphs. The first paragraph must be interesting. Many letters are cast aside unread, simply because the first paragraph contains nothing which really interested the reader. It must not only be interesting, however, but must introduce the subject of the letter in a direct and natural way. Letters sometimes fail because they are only interesting and nothing else. The minute they commence the business part of the letter, they cease to be interesting.

For instance, notice the difference in the two opening paragraphs in Dictaphone sales letters:

> Have you ever been kept away from your golf game because you had a great many letters to dictate?

Although this is not essentially a bad beginning, the idea of the dictaphone is not included. The thing that the letter aims to sell is not mentioned until later on. If the letter had commenced:

> Do you know that if you had had a Dictaphone you could have played golf yesterday afternoon?

we would have had a much better beginning. Not only would the letter have proved interesting but it would have accomplished its purpose of introducing the Dictaphone. This idea will be discussed further in the chapter on the sales letter.

CLEARNESS

Clearness a Courtesy

Good paragraphing helps to make a letter clear for two reasons. In the first place the paragraphs form natural subdivisions of the thought which the letter contains. And in the second place, if the

Gentlemen:

Your favor of the 4th inst., has come to us very much in the nature of a great surprise, for we had not the remotest suspicion that any confusion had happened in the execution of your order; but upon investigation we have discovered that your failure to receive the quality of goods which you ordered is due to a mistake made in our shipping department during a very heavy rush of business by which we have been inundated for the past ten days.

In some inexplicable manner, and by a rather strange coincidence, the exact quantity of goods of an inferior quality which had been ordered by another customer found its way into your package. We very much regret the occurrence, especially if it has subjected you to any inconvenience, and we have taken prompt measure to rectify the error by shipping you the goods called for in your order, and for which the prices in our invoice are correct.

We appreciate very much the disposition which you so courteously manifest to dispose of the inferior goods, shipped in error, and save us the expense of return freight. Fully confiding in your ability to dispose of the goods at the best possible prices, we will, if agreeable to you, commission you to dispose of them and credit us with the proceeds less five per cent. commission for yourselves.

Hoping that this arrangement will prove entirely satisfactory, and that our apology for the mistake may be accepted, we remain, with renewed assurances of our highest regard and respect,

Yours very truly,

Specimen Letter No. 8

This is the first of three letters written about the same subject. The first letter is high sounding and rhetorical. The fact that it is so verbose makes it dull and uninteresting. The real point of the letter has become so obscure that the letter seems to lack sincerity.

letter is properly paragraphed, these ideas will be placed in a correct relation. The reader has a right to demand that his letters will be clear. The average business man does not have the time to puzzle out the intricacies of another's faulty diction. Notice how much difference paragraphing really makes in a letter. In the letter which is not paragraphed, we have none of the concise, clear-cut results that are obtained when exactly the same sentences are properly arranged in paragraphs.

There are many evil results of the business letter which is not clear. Orders are delayed; salesmen go to the wrong place; goods are tied up on the road; and the business suffers generally. There is only one way to avoid correspondence which is not clear. That way is to think clearly. Unless the idea is firmly fixed in the writer's mind, he cannot express it. If he knows just exactly what he wants to say, the writing of the letter becomes an easy matter. All that remains is the arranging.

Reader's Viewpoint Important The writer should always remember that the reader's knowledge of the subject matter may be much more limited than his own. Terms which are perfectly clear to him may be unintelligible to his reader. It is always necessary that the writer place himself in the position of the reader. If he assumes more knowledge than that which the reader may be reasonably expected to have, the terms in which he speaks and the ideas which he thinks he is conveying are more or less unintelligible.

CONCISENESS

Conciseness is important. There are two dangers, however, which one must avoid in trying to be concise. In the first place briefness in and of itself is not sufficient. Conciseness

does not necessarily consist in saying things in few words, but in saying what we wish to say with clearness and with as much brevity as we can.

The second thing which is sometimes the result of attempting to be concise is a lack of courtesy. It is difficult to make a business letter as pleasant as one can make a personal interview. The smile, the handshake, are absent. Abruptness in a letter, as in an interview, sometimes leaves a bad impression upon the reader.

Conciseness Saves Time Conciseness is first of all a time saver. The man who dictates letters that are concise saves many hours for himself. An unnecessarily long letter requires not only time for its dictation, but time for its transcription as well. Much effort will be saved the writer, the stenographer, and the reader, if the writer will only appre-

Gentlemen:

We regret that a mistake occurred in the quality of the goods which we recently shipped to you. Our shipping department substituted another order for yours, and consequently you received goods much inferior to those which you ordered. Your order, correctly filled, has already been shipped. You may make any disposal of the old order that you choose. We will be glad if you would accept 5% commission from us on any disposal that you may make. We are very sorry that this has occurred.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 9

This letter, while written on the same subject as letter No. 8, has been much condensed. The different points still do not stand out as they should. The reason for this is that there are no paragraphs. Notice how the lack of paragraphs in even a small letter detracts both from the appearance and from the ease with which it can be read.

ciate the fact that unnecessary words take just as much time to write and transcribe as do necessary words.

Of considerable more importance, however, is the fact that the reader appreciates conciseness in the letters which he receives. Concise letters are intelligent. They show thought and preparation. Concise letters speak their message without waste of words and yet with force and accuracy. They bespeak for themselves a prompt and concise reply. They are business-like.

Notice the first of the three letters. It shows a simple idea expressed in a verbose manner. Somehow the letter not only lacks sincerity, but it conveys the impression that the writer believes in words and not in thought. When we rewrite the letter carefully, we see just what is meant by conciseness. We have the same ideas contained in the original expressed in a business-like manner. We have a letter which, because of its conciseness and its clearness, is convincing in a very natural and courteous manner.

Concise Letters Receive Attention

Conciseness also commands respect. It must not be understood that a letter can always be brief. Many times it is necessary for us to spend a great many words in conveying the ideas which we wish to express. But always the unnecessary words, the meaningless phrase, the purposeless paragraph, convey an idea of shiftlessness. No matter how long the letter, the idea which convinces is one which is stated both tersely and courteously. Few of the political and patriotic addresses of today which cover page after page in all newspapers, and which have taken their orators an hour and a half to deliver have the power or the eloquence of the Gettysburg Address.

Clearness and conciseness can be obtained by a proper organization of the material. Glittering generalities are worthless. The problem is one of sorting and collecting that which

is worth while, discarding that which is irrelevant, and arranging it in a simple, logical, clear and concise manner, remembering that the reader, not the writer, is to be the final judge of its effectiveness.

THE ENDING

Letters Must be Human

The ending of the letter also, to be as great a success as everyone desires it to be, must be something more than a mechanical masterpiece. Clearness and conciseness alone will not make a letter readable. It is the human element that makes the letter worth while.

Perhaps the most important stride in the actual composition of letters that has been made in the last few years, is the elimination of the participial close of a letter. In the old-fashioned business correspondence and some of the Parliamentary Departments in England today, we find such expressions as:

Believe me,
Faithfully yours,
Your most humble servant,

In America we find such expressions as:

Soliciting your further commands,
We beg to remain,

Every day we find letters ending in such involved phrases that they are really humorous. A certain business firm, upon examination of the correspondence which they were sending to one firm, found that in one month they had sent nearly fifty letters ending with the identical participial close.

It is not the contention, however, that oft-used or old phrases are necessarily bad. In is the contention that words and phrases which are unproductive and which do not express any of the personality of the writer become, after long

usage, not only worthless but harmful. Such endings as these are all conspicuous examples of words which are becoming absolutely meaningless.

Thanking you for your past favors,

Trusting that we shall receive the pleasure of supplying your further demands,

Thanking you again and hoping to hear from you soon,

Trusting that we may have a continuance of your valued patronage,

Sincerely trusting that this will be satisfactory to you,

Gentlemen:

We regret that a mistake occurred in the quality of the goods which we recently shipped to you. Our shipping department substituted another order for yours, and consequently you received goods much inferior to those which you ordered.

Your order, correctly filled, has already been shipped.

You may make any disposal of the old order that you choose. We will be glad if you would accept 5% commission from us on any disposal that you may make.

We are very sorry that this has occurred.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 10

This is the same letter as number 9 except that it has been properly paragraphed. Notice how much more effective this letter is than either of the others. It is clear, concise and forcible. It is a worth while letter.

Ending Should Express Sincere Belief

The problem, therefore, is to make these ideas or whatever ideas the writer wishes to convey, stand out clearly as expressions of what he really believes. The surest way of doing this is to say exactly the same thing that one would say to a man if he were talking to him on a street corner. If it is necessary to put in some word of thanks or some sincere desire at the end of a letter, put it in, but put this hope or desire in straightforward everyday English. It is the lameness of the participial ending which kills the idea. Straightforwardness lends character, force, and dignity to the whole letter.

The participial ending is the result of that very difficult problem of knowing when to stop. The real difficulty is not a difficulty at all. The writer of the letter with a strong forceful ending, has simply stopped when he has concluded his statement. In the illustrations given, notice how much more business-like are the endings which avoid the lameness of the long drawn out participial ending.

> Assuring you that at a more propitious time, and under such circumstances as you have set forth, we would deem it a great pleasure to accede to your request, we are
>
> Yours truly,

Better:

> We are sorry that we cannot grant your request.
>
> Yours truly,

> Assuring you that it will afford us great pleasure to fill your order, we are
>
> Yours truly,

Better:

> We shall be glad to fill your order.
>
> Yours truly,

Hoping it may be my pleasure to see you in New York at no distant time, and trusting you will consider this a standing invitation to make my home your headquarters whenever you may be in this City, I am

Sincerely yours,

Better:

You are most welcome at my home whenever you are in the City.

Sincerely yours,

In the last paragraph the writer has his final chance to make his appeal so strong that the reader will be persuaded to buy or sell, pay his bill, or make an inquiry. Practically ninety per cent of the business correspondence today would be improved if the writer would not weaken this last chance by including a participial close.

The third of the three specimen letters illustrates the different points which we have taken up in this chapter. The letter is concise, and has few unnecessary words. It is a letter which is clear, because it has been carefully planned, and the ideas were clear in the writer's mind. The participial ending has been entirely omitted. The sentences are clear and brief. The main idea of the letter as a whole, is perfectly evident. To gain these advantages, moreover, it has not been necessary to sacrifice courtesy. The language of the letter is simple, courteous but forceful. It typifies the aim of the modern business correspondent.

Chapter IV

THE BUYING LETTER

Buying Letter Must Be Accurate

A great deal depends upon a letter which orders goods. Buying letters are not difficult to write, but there are certain details which must not be omitted if the letter is to accomplish its purpose. Unless careful attention has been paid to these details, mistakes are likely to occur; it is against these careless mistakes in ordering goods that the buying letter is directed.

Essential Elements

There are four essential elements of the buying letter. First, the goods should be carefully described. Mail order houses are very particular to have order blanks printed which ask almost every conceivable question about the goods. Some of these questions appear unimportant. The fact is, however, that it is almost impossible to include too much information about anything that one wishes to buy.

Exact Description

Not only should the size, the color, the weight, the technical description of the article be included, but also the exact number of the articles desired. Many times a letter has been written ordering goods and the wrong quantity has been shipped. Many times the trivial omission of the color wanted has resulted in a loss of thousands of dollars. The necessity of giving exact and complete details in a buying letter cannot be overestimated.

Gentlemen:

The inclosed check for $10.00 is to pay for:

1 pr. Dark Gray Wool blankets, $4\frac{1}{2}' \times 7\frac{1}{2}'$

These blankets were ordered from your Spring Catalog, p. 67, but no catalog number was mentioned.

I expect to use them for camping purposes, so they must be heavy and durable.

Please ship by express.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 11

Notice that the three fundamental requirements of a buying letter are present: a description of the goods, the method of shipment, and the method of payment. Notice that the purpose for which these blankets are intended is also included.

Method of Shipment Then the method of shipment should be mentioned. Most mail order houses are particular to send their goods the cheapest way. Some buyers, however, have particular reasons for wishing their goods sent some other way. It may be that they want their goods sent over a particular railroad. Perhaps they are in a hurry for the goods. The writer of the buying letter must remember that the firm from which he buys goods cannot always anticipate his desires in the matter of shipping goods. It is not always possible for the firm to tell whether he needs them immediately, or whether the slowest method of shipment would be satisfactory. The safe way is always to include the method of shipment in the letter.

Method of Payment Method of payment is also important. Troublesome delays will be avoided if the writer will make his intended method of payment clear. A buyer should not assume that his credit is good unless he has a standing account. Neither should he assume that the firm will send goods C. O. D. simply because he is accustomed to buying his goods in that manner.

It must also be remembered that the buying letter should include not only the things which seem necessary from the buyer's standpoint, but every circumstance which is of importance to the seller. A business firm cannot be expected to know the usual method of doing business that the individual buyer has. It is a great deal more convenient for all parties if the buyer will be extremely careful to include all the details with regard to the method of payment.

Gentlemen:

Please ship by express:

5000 letter heads
5000 envelopes

This order is an exact duplicate of our last order, except that the paper is to be Hampshire Bond instead of National Bank Bond. The color, weight and style of engraving are to remain the same.

Kindly charge to our account.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 12

Notice how clearly the articles ordered stand out in this letter. No size is given because it is a duplicate order. If this letter is ever referred to in the files of any company, the subject matter of the letter will be seen at a glance, on account of this indentation.

Intended Use The fourth thing which should be included in the buying letter is a statement of the purpose for which the goods were intended. This is not always absolutely necessary. Many times, however, when ordering goods for a particular purpose, it is well to explain just what that purpose is. When this is done, the possibility is eliminated of receiving goods which, while technically filling the description, are not at all suitable for the particular purpose intended. Many times, too, the dealer will have goods which are more suitable than the ones ordered.

IMPORTANCE OF DETAILS

The value of adhering to these different details is great. Exact orders mean quickly filled orders, and delays are costly. Further than this, it must be remembered that many times it is necessary to write another letter to clear up some trivial matter which could have easily been included in the original letter. Unless the buying letter is complete, unless it precludes any further questions, it should not be considered satisfactory.

Tabulate Article Ordered The articles ordered should also be tabulated. If the articles are written in this way, with an increased indentation, they stand out very clearly. If the letter is ever referred to, it is not necessary to read the whole letter to find out just exactly what is ordered, because it can be seen at a glance. In the specimen letters numbers 11 and 12, notice how clearly the articles ordered stand out.

Conciseness Commands Attention While buying letters do not call forth a great deal of personality on the part of the writer, it is always possible to distinguish the poor letter writer by his buying letters. It requires careful thought to write a buying letter which will be complete

in every detail, and which is at the same time carefully and concisely worded. Unnecessary matter in a buying letter makes the order that much more difficult to fill. Conciseness in the buying letter, as everywhere else, commands attention.

Chapter V

SALES LETTERS

Sales Letter A Modern Form

The advance of modern business and the increase of competition has emphasized the need for a sales letter that will actually sell goods. No longer will the mere announcement that certain goods are for sale bring an influx of orders. The war, too, has made the sales letter more important, because with the decrease in the number of available salesmen and the increase in the cost of production, business firms have come to the realization that a cheaper and a more effective means of selling must be developed.

Because the sales letter is inexpensive, it has been abused. The mails have become flooded with all sorts of letters aimed to work up more or less worthy mail order propositions. As a result of this flood of cheap advertising and selling, many men do not pay a great deal of attention to any proposition which comes unheralded through the mails.

For instance, two men were talking in their offices one morning about the great number of sales letters which they had just received. By way of experiment they examined the morning mail which had just been opened and read. It was found that one man had received seventeen sales letters, fourteen of which were already in the waste basket. The writers of these letters had simply wasted postage, paper, printing, and energy, sending out a letter which the average man did not care to consider. But of considerable more importance is the

fact that they had actually cheapened their product by sending out a letter which was really unworthy.

This illustrates not only the need for the thorough business getting letter, but also the necessity of presenting a letter which will at least be read before it is cast into the waste basket. The extraordinary part of the foregoing illustration is the fact that upon a closer examination of the contents of these letters, one of the men admitted that he could have been interested in four of them if the subject had been introduced in a better way. He had tossed the letters aside, with only a vague idea of the message which they contained.

Sales Letter Must Convince

The sales letter, therefore, must make no mistakes. If it challenges the reader with a chip on its shoulder, its message is lost. If it simply entertains him without carrying conviction on any point, although no harm is done, a great opportunity has been lost. If it pleases, interests, and convinces him, the sales letter is an inexpensive salesman, notwithstanding the fact that a five or six per cent. return is considered good. To write a successful sales letter, of course, one must have some knowledge of the fundamental principles of salesmanship. The following are some of the points, used almost every day by salesmen, which can be incorporated into most sales letters:

THE ANALYSIS OF A CUSTOMER

Sales Letter Must "Fit" The Customer

Sales letters should be written to meet the needs of a particular class of people. It is necessary to thoroughly understand the wants of the man to whom the sales letter is to go. One cannot always pick out a hundred people who will be interested in any given proposition. It must be remembered

that the letter written to the farmer, for instance, is not likely to have a very great appeal to the city-bred man, even though written upon the same subject. A letter attempting to sell a piano to a bachelor farmer is unlikely to bring results, whereas, a properly written letter to a man who has one or two children may reasonably be expected to elicit an inquiry. On the other hand, the letter which would sell a piano to a farmer and his wife, might prove perfectly valueless if sent to the city-bred family.

The life insurance agent who can take off his coat and help load potatoes will sell much more life insurance to the farmer than will the man in chamois gloves.

PSYCHOLOGY OF SALES

A thorough understanding of just why people buy anything is also important. Why does one man buy an automobile for pleasure and another one buy an automobile truck? Why does one man put an elaborate heating plant in his house, while another man uses only a coal stove?

Generally speaking, there are two main arguments which appeal to every buyer. We are speaking, of course, of the ultimate consumer, but the jobber also must take these principles into consideration, because his business depends upon the desire of the public to buy whatever he has for sale.

Economy Always an Argument

The first of these arguments is that of economy. Every man is always ready to listen to any proposition which will save money. The woman who buys gingham aprons usually goes where she can get a given quality at the cheapest price. The woman who buys Parisian gowns follows exactly the same method. A given quality considered, people as a rule, buy where they can get that quality the cheapest.

The man who installs expensive machinery in his factory, does so because the cost of production per unit is decreased. He spends enormous sums in organizing his factory, installing new machinery, and in making his plant generally efficient, because these are the means of economy. The man who sells automobile tires must do one of two things. He must either argue that their original cost is cheaper or that, quality considered, the service they will render makes them cheaper in the long run. The man who sells overalls emphasizes the fact that they will wear longer and are less likely to tear than the ordinary overall. He makes this sale because the man who wears overalls is willing to pay for added service, which means money saved in the long run.

The second argument which the salesman may use in approaching a customer is the argument of convenience. While the average person is less susceptible to this argument, nevertheless it is the foundation argument of many of the greatest sales organizations in the world today.

Convenience A Convincing Argument

Electricity is not particularly economical. Probably in most cities gas is cheaper for cooking. Undoubtedly the old kerosene lamp was cheaper for lighting. The electric toaster must overcome the difference between its five-dollar price and the five-cent tin toaster of the gas-stove type. The real basis of the sale of many of the modern conveniences which we have in our homes today, has not been so much a matter of economy as a matter of convenience. Goods can be sold by use of this argument. That is the reason that electric appliances have such a wide-spread sale today.

The surest way to sell anything is to emphasize one of these fundamental ideas. Care should be taken, however, that the article is emphasized as a means to either economy or convenience rather than making either convenience or economy an end in itself.

In other words the idea of convenience must be closely connected with the idea of the electric light. The two ideas must be fused so that the prospective buyer really sees that they are synonymous.

Customers' Needs Must Be Analyzed

The man who sells the automobile truck has the double problem of convincing his prospect that his truck is more economical than other trucks, and that automobile trucks themselves are a necessary part of his business. Here again we see the need of analyzing the wants of the customer. You cannot sell an automobile truck to a grocer who makes no deliveries. You cannot sell one-ton trucks to men who deal in coal or boilers or especially heavy machinery. Always, the need of the customer must be analyzed to see whether or not convenience or economy or both are to be the basic ideas of the sale.

Good Salesmen Sell What Is Needed

The "putting over" idea is wrong. Someone has very aptly said that salesmanship consists in making a man want what he needs. The ideas and methods of the modern salesman have changed considerably in the last few years. Formerly, the real salesman was the man who could sell anything to anyone. Business men have found to their sorrow, however, that solid trade cannot be built up by selling people what they do not need.

Salesmen no longer attempt to overstock customers or sell them things which they know are not easily disposed of to the ultimate consumer. The salesman who attempts to "put over" any proposition, who attempts to sell for the sake of selling, and not to fill any particular need, has no place in the business world of today. The problem of the sales letter

is not simply to sell people something; it is to convince them that they should buy the thing which they need.

GETTING THE ATTENTION

First Paragraph Must Get Attention

We have already seen how the men who examined the contents of their waste baskets found many good ideas very poorly presented. Most of the letters did not get the attention of the reader. In order to succeed, therefore, the sales letter must first of all be an attention getter. Some experts claim that the letter which does not gain the attention of the reader in the first five words is a failure. Perhaps this is a little too strong a statement. Certainly, however, the first sentence must not only contain enough to center the reader's attention, but must interest him as well.

Attention Must Be Well Directed

The great danger of deliberately plotting to catch the attention of a reader, lies in the fact that we too often get it in some proposition not under consideration. A common example of this point is found in the numerous real estate offices in large cities, who crowd their windows with various devices to attract the attention. In one window, for instance, will be a monkey playing with a rubber band. The failure of this sort of catchy contrivance lies in the fact that there is nothing about many of the devices to suggest the thing which is for sale.

In some real estate windows electric brooders have been used with good results. The sight of these brooders with several hundred chicks gathered around them has been an immediate means of disposing of property suitable for chicken raising. The fact that this sort of land is for sale was immediately suggested.

Dear Sir:

You want to select a Gift that is sensible and practical. Let us give you a suggestion.

What would be more desirable than a Conklin Fountain Pen? You will find that the smoothness and sureness of this pen makes its use unlimited. You will be appreciated more than ever, because of your practical selection.

You can never have inky fingers with the Conklin. We guarantee our "Crescent Filler" to be absolutely non-leakable.

The prices range from $2.50 to $150.00. The pen point may be changed after Christmas to suit any handwriting.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 13

The value of the "you" interest cannot be overestimated. Even a fountain pen can be sold if the letter seems to be written directly to the reader. At Christmas time this letter would appeal to many a buyer because it seems to be interested in his own personal difficulty and seems to solve his own particular problem. This letter gets away from the billboard style of publicity advertising.

Whatever device is used in display advertising must always suggest that which is for sale. In the opening line of a letter the problem is not only to interest the reader, but to lead his interest toward the proposition which is under discussion. Notice how one writer starts a sales letter for vices addressed to a plumber:

> I have a friend who was a plumber. The other day he said to me: "That new vice that you sold me was the best thing I have ever used in all my years of experience."

Any man engaged in any business is interested in what a man of his own profession thinks about certain things, and when the writer of that letter said, "I have a friend who is

Dear Sir:

Have you seen any of the new flat-backed Mandolins? Quite a change in construction from the old style Mandolins, aren't they?

We are sending you a catalog of these new instruments so that you can get a fairly good idea of the changes that have been made. Notice especially the beauty of the Artist's Model on page 67.

The change in construction was not made simply to be different, or to make a better looking Mandolin. There is a scientific reason back of it. You will immediately notice the difference in tone quality and carrying power, over any of the old type Mandolins.

The guarantee on all Gibson instruments is for life. It covers quality and workmanship. No other manufacturer will give you that kind of a guarantee.

I will gladly give you a demonstration. Can you be satisfied without at least trying the best?

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 14

A considerable amount of explanation can be embodied in a sales letter if this explanation is interesting. Notice the beginning of the letter. The introductory questions have a point; they do not simply ask questions at random, but they immediately connect up the subject of the letter.

The idea of referring to a specific page is always a good one when catalogs are included. If the special page is mentioned or

referred to in the letter the chances are that the reader will at least open the catalog and refer to the page in question. Every effort should be made to interest him. Perhaps the catalog will, if the letter doesn't. At any rate, a reference to a specific page has a great deal of value.

The object in this letter, of course, is to get the reader interested in the new style mandolin. It has not an immediate sale as its object. It does not press the point too hard. A letter like this might well introduce another more forceful sales letter.

a plumber,'' he had the attention of a fellow mechanic. Notice, too, how the idea of the vice is introduced. In the very opening sentence he has not only caught the attention of the plumber, but has introduced his subject in such a way that the reader is interested in the product which is for sale.

One of the common means used by correspondents for gaining attention is the interrogative sentence. The question, to be effective, must lead directly to the proposition which is for sale. Questions which are too obvious, that is, to which there is but one answer, are to be avoided. Such questions as the following are not likely to be given much consideration by the average business man, because they are too simple:

You want to save money, don't you?
You like to sleep well, don't you?
Do you like to have a good time?

The questions which bring results are questions which allow the subject of the letter to be introduced in a favorable way. Such questions as these are more to the point:

Have you seen our new flat-backed Mandolins?

Did you know that you could have everything for your Thanksgiving dinner sent direct from the farm?

May we help you select your Christmas gifts?

Of considerable more value, however, than even the care-

fully chosen question is the straight-from-the-shoulder statement which accomplishes the double purpose of interesting the customer and introducing the subject of the letter. Statements like these:

> You should have a safety deposit vault for your Liberty Bonds.
>
> I know just how disagreeable it is to change tires. The Weed Chain Jack makes this job twice as easy as it used to be.

Beginning Must Interest And Convince

In short, the value of the opening sentence or sentences depends absolutely upon two things: First, does it interest the reader? And second, does it interest him in the real message of the letter? Unless it accomplishes both of these results, it cannot succeed. The letter which is only interesting can never convince. The opening sentence which is dull though sound in argument is not likely to be read. The opening lines must stand a double test.

HOLDING THE ATTENTION

Interest Must Be Sustained

Once having aroused the interest, never must that interest be allowed to lag. The best method of sustaining it is to continue in the personal mood in which the letter is started. The failure of a great many letters lies in the fact that, although they start out with something which is of sufficient interest, they only temporarily sustain that interest. Having once attracted the reader's attention, the personal tone is dropped and the letter proceeds in the hackneyed style of the ordinary letter. The good beginning is but a flash in the pan and only momentarily keeps the letter out of the waste basket.

PERSUASION

Persuade The Prospect To Buy

It is not enough to arouse a man's interest in an automobile truck or to convince him that the truck would be an economical adjunct to his business. There follows the necessity of persuading him to buy. A common method of persuading a man to buy is to offer some special inducement. This idea, however, has been somewhat overdone. Special thirty-day offers, free-trial offers, installment offers, have all been used to such an extent that the average prospect ceases to consider them an added inducement. The mere offer of credit no longer brings results.

There is another danger, too, and that is the danger of cheapening the article by placing it on the level of many cheap articles which are sold by clap-trap methods of special inducements. The man who appreciates the value of money is somewhat disinclined to believe that he is getting full value for his money when he can buy a thousand dollar piano for ten dollars a month.

Power of Suggestion Valuable

A better way is that straight-from-the-shoulder suggestion which sums up the argument of the seller and which calls for immediate decision on the part of the prospect. Persuasion by suggestion is also sometimes effective. Suggesting to the automobile owner what he can do with his car, suggesting that young men come in and try on a hat, are all subtle means of placing the prospect in the position of a man who has already bought the goods. The man who rides in an automobile is more easily convinced of its value than the man who cannot be persuaded to take a ride. The man who is willing to try on a hat has shown an interest which is a stepping stone to the actual sale.

Dear Sir:

We can not truthfully say that the motor, No. 38XX, would be satisfactory if installed in your canoe.

This little motor is very powerful and sturdy, but was designed particularly for light skiffs and rowboats. We find that the planking in most canoes is so very thin that after a year or so of use they commence to leak. You know, of course, that a leaky canoe is useless.

Now, although our motor might not give you any trouble for a few months, we feel that the constant vibration would undoubtedly, in time, shatter the planking and we certainly do not want you to run the risk of ruining your boat.

We are inclosing a little pamphlet which describes some of the light skiffs designed to be operated by our motors. On page 27 you will find a boat which is almost as light as your canoe, and yet which is strong enough to withstand the slight vibration of the motor. We are quite sure that this boat would give much better service than would your own canoe.

We would be very glad to answer any further questions which may arise.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 15

This sales letter is not aimed to accomplish an immediate sale. The firm which writes the letter wished to truthfully answer the questions which have been asked by an inquirer. Letters like this are valuable to almost any firm because they increase the good will of their customers.

Even if the article is not sold, perhaps the recipient of this letter

will remember, at some future date, that this firm did not attempt to sell him something which would prove unsatisfactory. Because he appreciates that truthful attitude now, he may later become a valuable customer. The idea of being truthful is very important. The sale-at-any-cost principles of a few years ago are not good.

THE CLOSE OF THE SALES LETTER

The close of the sales letter is doubly important because the sales letter fails unless it can persuade the reader to act. It is sometimes necessary to add one clinching point at the close. Such suggestions as "Mail this card today" or "Send us the dollar bill now," emphasize the need of action on the part of the reader.

Strong Ending Invaluable Clinching arguments should be used with discretion; they should be avoided if they show any tendency to weaken a letter. Only in those cases where the ending shows that there is a need for some straight-from-the-shoulder statement should they be used. It is much better to stop the letter abruptly when it is finished than to dilly-dally along with trailing phrases and sentences which are aimed to clinch an argument but which have hardly force enough to attach themselves to the letter. Such endings are useless appendages.

Specimen Letters Should Be Studied A careful study should be made of the different letters in this chapter. They illustrate the different points of procedure which must be employed to get the best results. Notice that they arouse interest. Notice that their argument is based not only upon facts but upon those facts which appeal to the buyer. Facts in themselves are valuable, but unless they are facts which appeal directly to the purchaser, the sales letter is not very convincing. In short, an automobile

tire cannot be sold simply because it is red, unless it can be shown that the fact that it is red increases its value as a tire.

The purpose of including specimen letters in this particular book must be made clear. The value of any specimen letter is not to afford a model for all other letters that might be written on the same subject. The real purpose is simply to illustrate one satisfactory method for developing a particular idea. In writing letters the student must be careful to keep these letters original. Letters which are copied or ideas which are taken from some one else are likely to lack personality and appeal when taken out of their original setting.

Complete Answers Needed The letter in answer to an inquiry must be written with especial care. The best selling letter which answers an inquiry is that letter which gives the most complete information. The man who writes to ask for information about a book or an engine or a piece of real estate is interested first of all in getting his questions answered.

Unless the letter in reply to his inquiry answers all his questions completely, it is not likely that he will be prepared to listen to arguments telling him why he should purchase. Each question should be answered with particular care and not until every question has been satisfactorily answered should any attempt be made to make a sale.

Truthful Answer The Best A great many times it will be found that letters like these cannot answer the questions of the inquirer satisfactorily. The answer, however, should be absolutely truthful. A letter which shows by its straightforwardness that it is truthful, is likely to carry a great deal of weight. A sale should never be made by taking advantage of a customer's lack of information about anything.

"Telling Not Selling"

Sales letters which are answering inquiries must always be written in simple language. The customer may not be as well informed about technical terms as the writer of the letter. The keynote of the letter should be to convey information—"telling, not selling," as someone has said—and anything which helps to convey a clear answer to any question is valuable.

Take the specimen letter, for instance. Though the man never purchases a motor, he is always likely to remember that the reply to his letter was truthful, even though it was not what he wished. Even though an immediate sale was not made, a customer has been found whose business may be more valuable in the future than if he had been disappointed the first time.

Principles Of Sales Letters Far Reaching

The study of the sales letter is of value not only to the student of salesmanship, but to the prospective letter writer. Successful salesmanship depends primarily upon making the buyer have confidence in the seller. The sales letter requires the greatest amount of convincing proof. If it succeeds, it succeeds because the writer of the letter has been able to convince some person other than himself of the value of the thing which he wishes to sell.

These principles extend far beyond the sales letter. No letter should ever be written that could not stand the tests of clearness, conciseness, accuracy, and force, which every sales letter must face. If the simplest kind of a letter can meet the tests of the sales letter, it is a success.

Chapter VI

THE ADVERTISING LETTER

Sales Letters (Continued)

Advertising Letters

Sales letters may be roughly divided into two great classes. The first is the general class of sales letters which aims to sell something with which the reader is already familiar. The second class includes those letters which may be called advertising letters. These are intended not only to sell some product but also to explain just what that product is. In other words, part of the letter must be devoted to an explanation of just what is for sale.

The letter selling Steer Warms is an example of this second class. It must solve the double problem of explaining the proposition very carefully and then of making the sale. The explanation must precede the selling part of the letter.

Proper Amount of Explanation Important

Usually this sort of a letter is directed to a particular kind of a customer, in order that that explanation may be fitted to a particular need. The specimen letter is directed to a Doctor. Naturally his needs are different from the average man's. Notice how his interest is gained. Notice that once having gained his interest the writer very carefully explains the use, the results, and the price of his article. Care must be taken to introduce the proper amount of explanation. Too much explanation makes the letter read like a catalog; consequently it loses interest. Too little explanation makes the letter lack clearness.

Advertising Not Publicity

Advertising, as applied to the sales letter, must not be confused with mere publicity. Bill-board advertising, or advertising which seeks to sell simply by continually pounding the name of a drink, or a gun, or a soap into the public mind, has no place in the sales letter. The advertising of the modern magazine is in reality nothing but a sales letter, with the exception

Dear Sir:

The Security Auto Theft-Signal is a specially heat treated metal band with a pointed hump or spike at the top. It locks around the rim and tire of the right front wheel. The owner's key, only, can lock or unlock it. It is his means of immediate identification. No two locks are alike.

The Theft-Signal is nickel plated, highly polished, and when attached to the right front wheel, is most conspicuous.

Driving an automobile with a Theft-Signal locked around the front wheel creates a terrific bumping noise--the big point strikes the ground at each revolution of the wheel with the entire weight and momentum of the car behind it. It is a signal to the passerby within sight or hearing distance that a thief is driving the car.

Whether the thief attempts to remove the Theft-Signal or operate the car, the result is the same. He shows his hand--he is recognized as a thief and arrested.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 16

The advertising sales letter has a difficult problem. It must do a great deal of explaining, and still must interest and convince the reader. This letter is too impersonal to interest and too explanatory to convince. Notice the rewritten letter, specimen number 17.

that it does not have the personal appeal of a letter and that it cannot analyze the prospect.

An analysis of newspaper advertisements shows much that is of value to the student of business correspondence. Newspaper advertisements must arouse the reader's interest; must

Dear Sir:

The Security Auto-Theft Signal will prevent your car from being stolen. One thousand automobiles were stolen in this city last month. That means that your car isn't safe, if you leave it for an instant.

This neat little Theft-Signal locks around the rim and tire of the front wheel. Your key only, can lock or unlock it. No two locks are alike. Your key is your identification.

We would like to show you this little device. It costs only $10.00; and the insurance companies will reduce your premiums so that the Signal will pay for itself in two years.

Why not avoid all this trouble of looking for a safe parking place? Why not avoid all that worry when the car is out of your sight by attaching a Theft-Signal today?

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 17

Notice how much more convincing this letter is than the first letter explaining this theft signal. The main idea that the writer wishes to convey is that this theft signal will prevent his car from being stolen.

This is done best of all by showing first, how dangerous an unlocked car is, and then by attempting to convince the reader that the theft signal will prevent his car from being stolen. It doesn't tell in detail how this will be done, but it calls attention to the fact that

its cost will be saved in a short time by a reduction in insurance premiums.

This argument is convincing for two reasons:

In the first place it illustrates the value of the argument based on economy; and in the second place, if the theft signal were not efficient, insurance companies would not be likely to grant a reduced premium.

In the closing paragraph, note how directly the question of buying a theft signal is brought home to the reader. Every car owner is troubled to some extent about the safety of his car. The best way to sell any kind of theft device is to emphasize the danger, on the one hand, and the efficiency of the device in question on the other.

explain a proposition without tiring him; must persuade him that the article for sale is something that he needs. The advertising letter has a more difficult problem. It may include no cuts or illustrations. If explanatory matter or pamphlets are included in a letter, the question of whether or not they will be read depends entirely upon how interesting the letter is.

Pictures Not Necessary That cuts are not necessary is shown by the fact that two of the largest advertisers today are actually discarding them and are using the simple, direct personal appeal of the sales letter in their magazine advertising. There are, of course, those who resort to the old style of publicity and who use magazines simply to print slogans or the trade name of a shampoo or a drink. That style of advertising is fast losing its appeal because it lacks the personal element.

Appeal Must Be Personal The secret of explaining and of still holding interest consists in being able to make the explanations have personal appeal. In other words, any explanation which does not approach a prospect in a personal way—which does not make him feel that the value

of any article is one which applies to his own particular case loses his interest.

Dear Sir:

When you receive a call at 2 o'clock in the morning and have to crawl out of a warm bed to make a drive of 10 or 15 miles, your greatest discomfort is the cold. Especially does it affect your hands. Once your hands are cold your whole body becomes chilled.

A doctor is entitled to every comfort obtainable. Steer Warms keep your hands warm while you drive.

They consist of two neat leather covered grips which lace on the steering wheel. They are heated by electricity from the storage battery or magneto. Steer Warms operate on the same principle as the electric heating pad, which after reaching a certain heat gets no hotter.

These grips may be laced on and connected to the battery in 5 minutes. The cost of maintenance is almost nothing. They are guaranteed for 5 years.

The price of these hand warmers is $7.50; specially for Ford Cars, $5.00. Your dealer has them in stock.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 18

The value of analyzing the needs of a particular customer is well illustrated by this letter. Notice how carefully the explanatory matter so necessary in advertising letters is brought in. The first paragraph interests—interests because it is written particularly to a Doctor, and the thing which a Doctor most needs is the thing which will contribute to his comfort in cold weather. The explanation very naturally follows. A different sort of letter would best suit a truck driver for instance. The customer and his wants must be analyzed.

Dear Sir:

I have a friend who is in Congress. The other day we were talking about winning the war, and he said to me: "It isn't the question of ships that worries us so much as the question of food. We have plenty of land on which to raise food-stuffs, but we haven't got the labor."

That man saw clearly that the question of farm labor is a vital one. The farmer can't plant or can't harvest without more help. That problem has probably troubled you.

That is why we want to tell you about our Little Giant Farm Tractor. You want something that will save both time and labor on your farm. Anything that will save labor, means more food to help win the war. Anything that will save time means more money in your pocket.

The inclosed booklet tells you just what our Little Giant Tractor is like. Will you read it over and tell us what you think of it?

Yours truly,

FIRST SALES LETTER (Follow-up series)

Specimen Letter No. 19

The first letter in a sales series can afford to spend a little more time in working up to the question of just what is for sale. In this letter, notice that two paragraphs are spent with the double purpose of interesting the farmer, and impressing him with the value of anything that will save labor. This first letter will interest him because it starts out in a leisurely fashion with a discussion of a subject which always interests—war. The question of food, also, is extremely vital, even in peace times. Notice the last sentence, a simple request, not high sounding, but conversational. The letter paves the way for the ones which are to follow.

Dear Sir:

There are lots of things which save money. The trouble is they cost more than any reasonable amount that they could be expected to save. The Little Giant Tractor is different. It would start paying dividends the minute it rolled on your property.

I have a friend who told me the other day, that he would like to own a tractor, but couldn't afford to put a thousand dollars into one. Yet this same man spends a thousand dollars every year keeping up stock, every dollar of which the Little Giant would save by increased production and low running expenses.

First costs are not necessarily the standard which determines actual expenses. The Little Giant is designed to give long service, and is built so sturdily that the cost of the Little Giant is a low one.

You did not reply to my last letter, and yet I feel that you ought to investigate the Little Giant. Drop the inclosed card and tell us what afternnoon we can come over.

Yours truly,

SECOND SALES LETTER

Specimen Letter No. 20

The farmer, as a rule, hesitates to put a great deal of money into anything; he is not a ready investor in any new proposition. The argument of economy, therefore, is one which must be thoroughly impressed upon his mind. This letter is devoted almost exclusively to the proposition of economy. The greatest argument against a farm tractor—cost—is thus forestalled.

"YOU" INTEREST

Perhaps the easiest method of bringing home the value of anything to the reader is by means of the so-called "You" interest. Letters which talk in an abstract manner, which treat the reader objectively rather than subjectively, get poor results. Letters should be written directly to the reader. Formal letters fail to create this much desired personal element.

Dear Sir:

Our Mr. Jones spent all day yesterday on the ranch of a man who, two years ago, had absolutely no faith in the farm tractor. Today this man owns four of them.

Jones went over to see at first hand what that man had done. He plows, harrows, sows, reaps, threshes, and hauls his grain to market by means of the Little Giant. As Jones puts it, there is nothing that he doesn't do with this Tractor.

As the man himself puts it, he would rather sell his farm than go back to his old methods of farming. I want Jones to tell you about this, because I know that what the other man has done, you can do.

When may he come over?

Yours truly,

THIRD SALES LETTER

Specimen Letter No. 21

A farmer is always willing to listen to the arguments which are based upon results. What his neighbor does, he is willing to try. To demonstrate the practicability of the farm tractor as shown by its actual performance on other farms, is the purpose of this letter. The universal application of the farm tractor to all the farm work is cleverly brought out.

Dear Sir:

Where are you going to get the labor necessary to put in and harvest this year's crop? Men are hard to get, yet under the hood of every Little Giant you will find ten men, and ten teams, always ready and willing to go to work. Night or day, rain or shine, they are always on the job without a word of complaint.

The Little Giant saves labor.

The Little Giant saves money.

Our production of Little Giants will not be as great as it was last year. We just can't get the kind of material that goes into the Little Giant. We can't cut down the quality, so we have got to cut down the number of machines.

I know what the Little Giant can do for you. I want you to have your machine.

Mr. Jones is anxious to see you. He will call if you will only sign the inclosed card. Do you want him to come over?

Yours truly,

FOURTH SALES LETTER

Specimen Letter No. 22

This letter is more forcible. The question of labor has always been pressing on the farm. The saving features of the Little Giant Tractor are emphasized in two paragraphs of five words each. The quality of the tractor is emphasized by the fact that production has been cut down in order to keep up its standard. The last question is point blank. It puts the matter squarely up to the prospect.

Notice that the interest has been sustained in all four letters and that the letters gain in force as they progress. Notice that even in four letters there has been practically no repetition.

Abstract Value Not Convincing

The failure of a great many sales letters lies in the fact that value is emphasized in an abstract manner. Everyone recognizes that diamonds have value; so do automobiles; so does land; so do stocks and bonds. But the successful sale must do more than show this value. It must show that the value is not a general quality, but is something which will prove of direct benefit to the prospective purchaser.

This is where the "You" interest plays an important part. In the letter selling Auto Theft Signals, we find that the writer has spent all his time explaining and praising this

Dear Sir:

The quick, delicate and invisible erasure has always been much desired by stenographers. It has been almost impossible to make that kind of an erasure with the ordinary eraser.

The Rush eraser will surprise you. Just a little stroke and the letter or figure is quickly erased.

You can't depend upon acids and rubbers. The Rush way is the cleanest, quickest and the most satisfactory method.

For fifty cents I will mail you a sample.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 23

Small articles are best sold by short letters. Too much talk is not likely to convince. This letter aims to sell directly to the consumer. It has as its object a reply, inclosing fifty cents. It does not waste time—it either succeeds or fails on its merits.

It spends no time in convincing a man that he has need of an eraser. The analysis of his needs is left entirely to the reader.

device. But the value of that device to you or me depends not upon its value as a patented article, but as a possible means of preventing your car or my car from being stolen.

That is why the second letter is better. The value of the Signal is not introduced as an abstract proposition, but it is connected up to the reader of the letter in such a way that it is his *car* that is being talked about, not the Auto Theft Signal.

Man-to-Man Talk Brings Results

The simple sales letter, too, must depend to even a larger degree upon this "You" interest for making its appeal really human. Even so prosaic an article as a fountain pen can be successfully sold by mail. Every one knows what a fountain pen is. Few really new improvements have been made in the fountain pen during the last few years. The only method of actually selling this man a pen must be one which makes him feel that he has a personal need for such an article. The "You" interest must here play an important part. The man-to-man talk of the salesman must be incorporated into this letter in order that the value of fountain pens in general may become value to this man in particular. The specimen letter illustrates this idea. The "You" interest connects up the pen with the prospect. Notice how this idea is carried out in the fountain pen letter in Chapter V.

THE FOLLOW-UP LETTER

Follow-up Letters Gaining in Favor

The follow-up letter is one of the most successful forms of selling that we have. Its use is becoming more and more general because it has successfully demonstrated the fact that continual application of sound selling methods by mail will bring results. Although the war has made the use of the

sales letter more necessary, the follow-up letter seems likely to gain in favor even after the war is over.

Interest Must Be Maintained

The greatest failure of follow-up series is the fact that it does not maintain interest over a sufficiently long period. In a single letter one may have the first paragraph of an interest-arousing nature and proceed at once to the business part of

Dear Madam:

It's Spring Time! Surely a time to think of a daintily set breakfast table under the rose arbor, with the world in fragrant bloom.

And what could be more in keeping with such a morning than crispy "Shredded Wheat, served with cream and strawberries, perhaps fresh from your own garden?

"Shredded Wheat" is an ideal breakfast food for everyone--from the kiddies, who like it just as it comes from the box, to Grand-mere, who thinks it delicious when it has been dipped in milk, drained and fried in butter, and served with cream. It is delicious, too, when split and toasted with cheese.

Note on your memorandum now that you wish a box of this nourishing and sustaining breakfast food with your next order of groceries.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 24

This is a very appetizing letter. It is more in keeping, however, with magazine advertising than it is with the personal letter. Its only advantage over the magazine advertisement is that it has a little personal appeal. The reader will think of the letter as being his letter.

The failure of the letter, however, is its failure to take advantage

of this very fact. A letter which is written to an individual should take advantage of this personal element to the greatest extent possible. The "you" interest must be introduced if a letter like this is to succeed.

the letter. But because the first of a series of follow-up letters is interesting, we have no guarantee that the succeeding letters will be read. The first problem then, is to maintain interest throughout all of the letters.

One Idea Should Run Throughout

Then, too, there is a natural tendency on the part of many writers to include too much in each letter. This is dangerous, because it means that there must be a great deal of repetition; and repetition, except for occasional emphasis, is boring. It is well in a series of sales letters to feature one particular point just as the single sales letter does. A series of sales letters will fail unless this fundamental idea runs throughout all of the letters. Usually, of course, this idea will center around either economy or convenience.

The aim of a sales letter should be kept well in mind. Sometimes sales letters are written merely with the idea of eliciting an inquiry from the prospect. Perhaps a request from him that a salesman should call, is desired. This means of course, that the sale has been practically completed. This method is followed in selling most propositions involving a fairly good sized sum of money.

Small Articles Sold by Direct Method

Smaller articles, like cigars and tobacco, which are sometimes sold by means of follow-up letters, have as their aim an actual order mailed by a prospect. This means that the pressure must be brought to bear directly on the man's pocket-book. The series must be brought to a close in a little more forcible manner than the letter which merely seeks to have the man

make an inquiry or request a personal interview. This is the direct method.

Sales letters which seek to elicit an inquiry serve two purposes. They save the expense of sending a salesman to an interested prospect, and they almost complete the sale before he does make a personal call. This is the indirect method.

Specimen Series Use Indirect Method The series of follow-up letters which are included are written in the matter-of-fact tone which is likely to appeal to the class of men interested in farm tractors. The aim of the sales letters has not been to directly make a sale, but rather to elicit a request from the farmer that a salesman be allowed to call. Of course, this salesman could call anyway, during the process of the sales letters. The psychological fact remains that if the reader requests the salesman to call, he has a much more fertile field of endeavor.

Notice, too, how clearly the idea of economy runs throughout all of the different letters. The American farmer is particularly susceptible to this argument.

ADVERTISING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Many business firms send, from time to time, letters announcing sales along particular lines, or brief descriptive letters regarding some feature which is being added to their stock. These letters take the form of newspaper advertising with the exception that they are addressed to a particular person.

Announcements Are Not Good Sales Letters

While announcements of this kind have their value, it is the writer's opinion that however clearly they may be written, their drawing power would be increased if the "You" interest was a little bit more predominating. A letter of this type is the one featuring Shredded Wheat. Very dainty, and quite in keeping with its appetizing idea, it nevertheless somehow fails to achieve the results of a letter which is aimed more directly at "You." The "You" interest is the only thing that will save the sales letter or the advertising letter from becoming cut and dried newspaper copy mailed to individuals.

Chapter VII

LETTERS OF APPLICATION

Letter of Application Is a Sales Letter

The letter of application must be a sort of sales letter, because it succeeds only when the writer sells his services. Formerly letters of application were simple statements to the effect that the writer wished to be considered an applicant for the position advertised in "this morning's Times." The successful applicant for any position that is advertised must do more than merely answer the advertisement. His letter should especially reflect his character and personality.

Application Must Have Personality

Any letter must be carefully and thoughtfully written; any letter must be free from errors in punctuation and grammar. The successful letter of application always contains in addition the vital element of personality. The man who really wants a position must make his letter as powerful a factor in securing it as he does his personal interview. It must not only distinguish him from the other applicants because of its force and clearness, but it must carry the conviction of his belief in his own ability. It must carry the conviction which every sales letter should possess.

Two Dangers To Avoid

A word of caution at this time should be given to all prospective letter writers. There are two dangers to be faced. In the first place, there is the danger of conforming to standards of writing which have become meaningless and characterless from long

use. In the second place, there is the danger of making the letter appear flippant or frivolous. He who strikes a happy medium between these two extremes, will solve the problem.

Sincerity Necessary Letters which merely attract attention are not sufficient. The employer is buying something. He has a right to expect that he will be given value received for his money. If the writer of a letter of application shows by the character of the letter that he does not take himself seriously, he has little hope of persuading any one else to believe in him.

Letters which are too boastful are likely to be rejected by the employer. A man who entirely over-estimates his own

Dear Sir:

I hereby apply for the position of stenographer which you advertised in this morning's Times.

I am a high school graduate, have attended college and have just completed a business course in Mrs. Jones' Business College. I would appreciate a personal interview.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 25

This is the ordinary type of letter which is written in answer to an advertisement:

"Wanted—A Stenographer. Box 230, Times."

Theoretically this letter answers the advertisement satisfactorily. Actually it does not place itself in a position where it will command any more attention than any other letter. The ordinary letter should be avoided. If an applicant has personality, if he is capable, these things should be brought out, not only by more inclusive statements but by the tone of the letter. This is the type of letter which is likely to receive no reply.

value usually is unable to cope with situations into which he has been thrown by this over confidence. Likewise, the letter which is flippant, makes sweeping statements, and is not backed up with the heartfelt sincerity of the writer, is likely to receive little consideration.

We must have then, a letter which is not too formal, and which is not too informal. It should be sincere, because sincere letters are impressive. It should create in the employer a desire to meet the writer of the letter; if the applicant comes into an office with the employer in this attitude of mind, the position is almost his.

Two Classes Letters of application may be roughly divided into two main classes. The first class is composed of letters which are answers to the so-called blind advertisement, that is, where the name of the advertiser is not revealed, and where it is simply stated that a bookkeeper or stenographer or a clerk is wanted. The main object in writing an answer to that kind of a letter is, of course, to obtain a personal interview.

The second class is written in answer to an advertisement where a large number of questions are asked and which necessarily calls for a detailed reply.

In answering the first kind of an advertisement, much may be left to the discretion of the writer. A reply like this is sometimes all that is necessary:

Box 982
Times Office

Dear Sir:
I believe that I can qualify for the position which you advertise. When may I come to see you?

Yours truly,
Phone 8818 John Smith,
3727 47th St.

M, Box 31
Times Office

Dear Sir:

I feel that my training and experience have made me particularly suited for the position which you advertise in this morning's "Times."

I have had a good general education, having been graduated from the Los Angeles High School. I also attended Stanford University for two years, and after I left there in February, 1917, I entered Business College. There, I took the entire course in business training, including Stenography, Office Training and Commercial Law.

After I received my diploma, I entered the Law office of the H. P. Morton Company, by whom I was employed until the recent dissolution of the firm on February 28th of this year.

Mr. Morton has given me permission to say that he might be called upon for reference. His telephone number is A5670.

I should appreciate a personal interview. My telephone number is F5624.

Yours respectfully,

Specimen Letter No. 26

This letter—an actual letter—contains a great deal of information which might be termed uncalled for, but there is enough positiveness about the letter to make one believe that the writer is capable. In addition, the exact qualifications are given in detail. The phone numbers make an inquiry easy.

The applicant for a position should always remember that he is trying to sell something. If he succeeds, he will do more than simply offer his services for sale—he will display them to the best advantage. He will write convincingly but not boastingly of his ability.

All Questions Must Be Answered

While the above form can be used, it is not always wise to be too brief. A few of the personal qualifications of the writer could be included, even though nothing definite was asked for. If the writer has any particular qualifications, his chances of obtaining the interview would be thereby increased. A general caution which may be applied to all letters which answer the second class of advertisements, is this: Be sure that every question asked is answered exactly in the manner

Dear Sir:

Last week I was thrown out of employment by the bankruptcy of the Western Construction Company. I have worked for them for the last three years.

Your advertisement in the Times this morning interested me, because I have been looking for a position where executive ability was really desired.

I am a college graduate and have made an extended study of corporation business. While with the Western Construction Company I organized their efficiency department, which has paid a net return of over thirty per cent.

May I come over and see you? I feel quite sure that an interview will be to our mutual advantage.

Yours very truly,

Specimen Letter No. 27

This is a brief letter which conveys a great deal of the personality of the writer. It expresses his confidence in his own competence. Without conveying a great deal of information, the letter is convincing. A man who had advertised would hardly feel that he could afford not to grant this particular applicant an interview. Not the position, but the interview, is the object of the writer.

Dear Sir:

I would like the position as saleswoman in the hosiery department in your store, which you advertised in this morning's "Times."

I have had three years' experience in a dry goods store in a small town. I was head saleswoman, having three girls in my charge. I selected all goods for the Hosiery, Corsets and Underwear departments and assisted in the buying of the Silks and Dress Goods.

I know that Mr. W. B. Jones of Ashland, Oregon, will be glad to tell you about my character and ability.

I am looking for a permanent position where there is a reasonable chance for advancement. I will appreciate a personal interview.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 28

Of still a different type is this letter. It is straight-forward, business-like and complete. Not only is the experience of the writer given, but the exact lines in which she has worked are included. It is a good letter without being pretentious.

demanded in the advertisement. If questions are asked regarding the expected salary, or the education, age and experience of the applicant, those must be answered. Many men include questions like that simply to see whether or not the applicant is accurate in answering questions, and a careless reply is very likely to lose an interview.

Dear Sir:

You are looking for a stenographer. May I submit my qualifications?

In 1916 I was graduated from Columbia University, where I specialized in English and Economics.

My knowledge of Stenography was obtained in a ten months' course in the Stenotype Department of the Union Business College of New York City.

My special qualifications include:

1. Rapidity and accuracy in taking dictation and in typing.
2. Thorough acquaintance with ordinary office appliances.
3. Energy, adaptability and initiative.

I have had no experience, but my thorough course of business training, backed by my general university education, has qualified me to assume the duties of a responsible stenographic position. I am confident that I can do your work.

I am twenty-four years of age and ask Twenty-Five Dollars a week salary. I should appreciate an interview.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 29

Of a decidedly modern tone is this letter. Its value as an actual letter of application is questionable. It is, however, sincere, and for this reason might command attention where other letters would be passed by.

The success of any letter of application will depend upon the reader. Some employers would be inclined to take this kind of a

letter very seriously; others might not. It is a letter which might gain a great deal, or lose everything. For that reason it is not to be generally recommended.

Reasonable Salary Should Be Asked For

The answer to the question: "State the least salary expected," is a bug-bear to most applicants for positions. Experience has proved, however, that the man who is willing to work for the least salary does not always get the job. Many an applicant who is really worthy has received no reply to his application when he has agreed to work at a wage far below that which he could really earn. The duties expected have a great deal to do with the salary which one receives. Offers to work for too small an amount are sometimes considered as evidence of incompetency.

For example, an advertisement appeared in a newspaper asking for the services of a competent bookkeeper with two or more years' experience. Among the applicants was a young man who apparently could qualify in every particular. In answer to the question: "State the lowest salary at which you will work," he said, "I should expect $10 a week."

This is in itself an evidence of either incompetency or poor judgment, either of which would disqualify the applicant. No bookkeeper who is really competent, and who has had two years' experience could reasonably be expected to work for $10 a week. The admission that that would prove an acceptable salary is fatal.

Notice two letters which are in answer to the same advertisement for a stenographer.

In the first letter we find a very ordinary form of application. There is nothing about the letter which makes it so very different from any letters that might be received. There apparently is nothing wrong with the qualifica-

tions of the writer, but nevertheless there seems to be nothing particularly forceful about his letter.

The second letter contains a more appealing sort of application. The writer seems to realize that the success of obtaining an interview depends upon convincing the employer that his qualifications are human as well as mechanical.

Letter Should Awaken Employer's Interest

In other words, the second letter illustrates what is meant by personality, and unlike the first letter it conforms to no standard which has become worn out by constant use. It tends to arouse the interest of the employer, not in the letter, but in the writer of the letter. This means that, should an interview be granted, the applicant presents himself under the most favorable circumstances; he has already made a favorable impression.

Letter Paves the Way

The letter of application which is absolutely colorless and which does not make a definite and favorable impression, leaves all the difficulties of the first interview to be reckoned with. The letter which paves the way for this meeting, which makes the employer feel that he is about to meet a real person rather than a letter writer, enables the applicant to meet his prospective employer with the ice already broken.

The ultimate test of the letter of application will be: Will it get an interview? The letter which answers that question affirmatively must create a desire upon the part of the employer to meet the writer of the letter. Unless the applicant can inject some of his own personality into the letter, or convey some of the confidence which he has in his own ability, his letter is likely to fail. He makes the employer feel that he is a nonentity.

The writer of every letter of application should have something particular to sell. In answering an advertisement he has the advantage over the ordinary salesman because he knows that his prospect wants to buy. If he has anything particular to offer in the way of education, experience, or attainment, that is the thing which he should feature. It is the applicant who is especially fitted for any position, who gets the job. Just as every salesman attempts to present his wares in the most attractive manner possible, so should the writer of a letter of application present himself in the way which is most likely to convince the employer that his services are desirable.

Chapter VIII

COLLECTION LETTERS

Collection Letters Have Changed

Great improvement has been made in the method of collecting money by mail. Formerly, only one idea was considered; that was the rough-and-ready attempt to get the money. It has been demonstrated, however, that the successful collection letter must not only collect the money, but it must retain the good will of the customer. The collection letter may collect money and then only partially succeed in its real purpose. Successful business depends upon continued patronage. The loss of the customer means not only the loss of future sales, but a living advertisement against the firm. Letters which contain little outside of a threat to place the account in the hands of a lawyer, lose business.

Bluff Does Not Pay

This type of letter failed for two reasons. First of all, the average man who does not pay his bills, is not always easily bluffed. Usually the man who refuses to pay his bills promptly has a reason which may be perfectly legitimate, or he is simply a deadbeat against whom a law suit would be futile. Such a man is not worried at all about being sued.

In the second place that type of letter failed because, even if the man did not have a good reason for not paying his bills, he might still have been a good customer. Letters which are too bombastic in their threats when applied to a customer of this sort usually result in the loss of his trade

forever. A dissatisfied customer is an advertisement against the firm. He takes away other trade besides his own.

It must not be understood that accounts should never be placed in the hands of an attorney, nor that letters should never make the statement that accounts will be placed in the hands of a collector.

It should be assumed that delinquent customers know that accounts placed with attorneys for collection usually result in actual losses to the firm. Threats which are not intended to be carried out should be avoided. The statement that legal means will be resorted to should be made when that is the real intention of the writer.

Dear Sir:

We are again sending you a statement of your January account.

I regret very much that you have allowed this account to become delinquent, because I do not like to feel that my confidence in you was misplaced.

If you have overlooked this matter, just drop us a check. It will be greatly appreciated.

Yours truly,

FIRST COLLECTION LETTER (Follow-up series)

Specimen Letter No. 30

The first collection letter of any series should not be made too strong. On the other hand no writer of a collection letter is at liberty to say that it is either the first or the last, because the results which each letter brings will tell whether or not another letter is necessary.

The appeal in this letter is strong and yet there is nothing which is likely to prove offensive. It must be remembered that the motto of every collection series should be, "Get the money, but save the customer."

Dear Sir:

I cannot understand why you have not made some payment on your account. You realize, of course, that accounts which we carry as long as this, result in actual losses.

I thought at first, that probably this matter had been overlooked by you, or that perhaps it was one of those matters which you had neglected. I still hope that this is the case.

I am very anxious that you should re-establish your former good credit. Only a prompt remittance on your part will do it.

Won't you mail us your check today?

Yours truly,

SECOND COLLECTION LETTER

Specimen Letter No. 31

This is a strong letter. It is well to note that at all times an opportunity is left for the customer to explain his delinquency. The opportunity to re-establish his former good credit is always left open.

Form Letters Must Be Courteous

There are two principal methods of collecting an account by mail. One is by a series of set form letters which are mailed to all customers regardless of their standing with the firm. Many accounts can be collected in this manner. These letters must not be too formal; nor should they be lacking in courtesy. The value of courtesy is paramount because accounts which are easily collected are accounts that are worth having. Letters which keep the good will of the customer are fully as necessary as letters which bring in the money.

FOLLOW-UP SERIES OF COLLECTION LETTERS

The most satisfactory method of collecting accounts is by means of what is known as the series of collection letters. The writer of a letter can never know which one of the letters will bring results, and in order that the series shall gain in forcefulness as they progress, the first letter must not be too

Dear Sir:

Sometimes things happen which make it quite impossible for our customers to settle their accounts promptly. If customers do not let us know about this, it results in a misunderstanding all around.

If you are not well, I should like to know about it. If there is any possible reason why you cannot make payment, please write and explain the circumstances. I am always willing to make any just concession that I can.

But I do not like to feel that you are deliberately letting your account become more and more delinquent. Some sort of an explanation on your part will clear matters up considerably.

If there is anything that I can do to help you, let me know.

Yours truly,

THIRD COLLECTION LETTER

Specimen Letter No. 32

This letter emphasizes the willingness of the firm to make any just concession that they can in their endeavor to help the customer clear up the debt. The idea of keeping the customer is still adhered to very strictly. It often happens that letters like this will bring forth a reasonable excuse for non-payment. While, of course, excuses are not the object of the letter, they at least open up a ground for discussion between the delinquent customer and the creditor.

strong. If the first letter is too emphatic it spoils the effect of the letters which follow.

Appeal to Customers' Fairness

Experience has shown that people are more inclined to pay money when they believe that it is really needed than when they are merely asked for it. Some sound argument—an argument which, perhaps, shows the basis upon which the sale was made, or which calls attention to the fact that over-due ac-

Dear Sir:

I have given you every opportunity at my command to make some sort of an arrangement for paying your account. You have disappointed me.

I regret, therefore, that I have been forced to take other means to collect this account. Mr. Edwin Chapman, our attorney, will take this matter up with you on the fifteenth of the month.

Law suits are disagreeable. If you can possibly avoid this unpleasantness, communicate with me before the fifteenth. Please act quickly.

Yours truly,

FOURTH COLLECTION LETTER

Specimen Letter No. 33

The last letter of any collection series is important, and it should be written only when the writer is firmly resolved that no further letters will avail. The difference between this series of letters and the ordinary series lies in the fact that no reference is made to an attorney and no threat is made to place the account in the hands of a collector until the writer is actually determined to do so.

The second paragraph of the letter is not a threat; still an opportunity for making an explanation or of paying the account is left.

Keeping the good will of the customer and collecting the money at the same time are difficult tasks, perhaps, but they can be done.

counts actually do result in losses to the firm which makes the sales on a cash basis, or which calls attention to the value of good credit on the part of the customer—may all be included. An appeal to the customer's fairness gets results. Anything which takes off the cutting edge of the letter which demands money is worth while.

As the series of letters progresses, every possible inducement that can be brought to bear upon the delinquent customer must be made. Every possible method should be employed which will allow the man a chance to do one of two things—either immediately make payment, or explain his delinquency.

Opportunity To Explain Should Be Offered

This opportunity for explanation can hardly be over-emphasized. The opportunity should always be left for a man to re-establish, in a measure, his former good credit. The idea of offering the man the two alternatives—either to pay or to explain his reasons for nonpayment—must always be kept well in the foreground. The letter must carry the tone that if there is no reason for nonpayment, of course payment should be made. If there is such a reason, the creditor has a right to know it. Notice how these ideas have been carried out in the specimen letters. If there is anything at all in the theory that most people like to pay their debts, then letters like these, which give them the opportunity of explaining away their delinquency, will bring results. That this is a result getting series, has been demonstrated.

Final Letter Must Be Forceful

The final letter, of course, should contain a warning note that the account is about to be placed in the hands of an attorney. It is important, however, that this warning should never be made until the account is actually ready to be turned over. After a series of letters has been written, there is really noth-

ing left to say. If, after four or five good letters have been written no results have been obtained, it is time to pursue other means of collection. No announcement of that change in policy should be made until it is ready to be instituted. The bluffing collection letter does not pay in the long run.

Dear Sir:

We were very glad to receive your order for 10 barrels of shingle stain. Our credit manager informs us, however, that there is still a considerable balance due on your January account.

We are making every effort possible to avoid increasing the delinquent amounts on our books. Will you help us in this matter by sending us a check to cover your balance?

We shall hold your order ready for shipment until we hear from you.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 34

A rather difficult task and yet not an impracticable one is the collection letter combined with the sales letter. It is hardly to be recommended, however, for any considerable amount.

In this letter, a customer who already has a delinquent account, has ordered goods. A statement that the goods will be sent as soon as the account has been cleared up is not always satisfactory, but is many times necessary.

The success of this kind of a letter depends upon the directness and sincerity with which it is written. A letter like this is not very likely to prove offensive.

Avoid Apologetic Tone

Let it not be construed that the collection letter should be a meek and mild affair. No one should hesitate to ask for that which is his. An apologetic tone especially should be avoided. If one trace of weakness appears in the whole collection letter, it is likely to fail. If it is not absolutely sincere, its lack of sincerity is likely to be the very cause for non-payment.

Firm Forcible Fair

The point is simply this: The collection letter must be firm, must be forcible, but must avoid, above everything else, any tone or any statement which arouses the antagonism of the customer. Many a good account has been lost simply because the writer of the letter failed to appreciate that the man to whom he was sending it was human and that being human, he would react as one might expect a human being to react.

Chapter IX

LETTERS OF COMPLAINT

Purpose Not to Complain The main purpose in writing a letter of complaint is not to register a complaint against existing conditions; it is to secure an adjustment of those conditions. The successful letter of complaint is not successful because it succeeds in laying blame for some mistake, but because it secures an effective remedy for whatever mistake has occurred.

Two Classes Letters of complaint involve two distinct classes. First, there is the actual letter of complaint written by a customer requesting adjustment of the claim. Then there is the letter written by the firm to the customer, which attempts to adjust the difficulty.

LETTERS TO BUSINESS HOUSES

Take the first class. A man in Arizona, or New Mexico, orders a piano from a mail order house in Chicago. The piano arrives in a damaged condition or with parts missing. There is no doubt that the fault lies with the shipper and not with the common carrier. Obviously it will avail little for the man who is situated so far from the factory to do a great deal of storming. What he wants is either a new piano or sufficient parts to repair the damage. If he has paid for the piano and is put to additional expense to repair it in his own town, he wants to be compensated for his trouble.

Letter Must Be Detailed

His letter, in order to get results, must contain something besides a tirade against the manufacturer. First it must contain a clear and concise statement of the matter under discussion. There should be absolutely no doubt as to the shipment about which the man is complaining. Then there must be a simple but detailed statement of the damage or shortage. This also must be very clear because even though the man is sure in his own mind that the article must be replaced, perhaps to those who are well acquainted with the proposition, there may be another way out of the difficulty. All the facts must be given in order that there may be no mistakes about the real difficulty.

Gentlemen:

The goods which you sent us February 10, were not properly crated. As a result, two chairs were broken and the top of one of the tables was badly scratched.

You know, of course, that when goods are simply wrapped in burlap, instead of being crated, the railroad company cannot be held responsible for any damage. We feel, therefore, that you should be willing to make some sort of an adjustment in this case.

This is the first time that we have had any cause for complaint, and we regret very much to be compelled to return the goods. We are asking you, however, to either replace the damaged articles, or to return our money immediately.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 35

This letter typifies the type which is best used in attempts to secure an adjustment of any complaint. The writer must always remember that the object of the complaint letter is not to complain.

In this case the reasons for bringing the complaint against the company, instead of the common carrier, are clearly shown. The letter is firm but not prepossessing. It hopes to secure an adjustment by its reasonableness. It is, however, not indefinite in its demands.

The great danger of writing a letter of complaint is simply to complain and not ask for anything to be done. The letter of complaint must include a specific request. It should not ask for adjustments in general, but for some adjustment in particular.

Gentlemen:

I am returning the six reams of paper which I received from you yesterday. You sent yellow, and I particularly specified that the paper was to have been white.

I can't understand why you should make this mistake; but this is the third or fourth time that this has occurred this year. I wish you would check up my orders more carefully in the future.

I shall repeat my order. What I want is:

6 Reams #171 Paper. Color White.

Please see if you can fill my order correctly.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 36

This illustrates the wrong method to be pursued in writing a letter of complaint. It might be written more insolently than it is. The point is, however, that it is neither polite nor respectful. It is not likely to receive the same courtesy that the next letter, written to adjust the same complaint, would receive.

The Wrong Way

A letter that will bring results must not only be firm but must also be courteous. The value of courtesy as an asset can hardly be over-estimated in this particular type of letter. Many times letters which are aimed to remedy a just complaint fail to bring results because the letter is written in such a way that the firm to whom it is addressed becomes antagonistic. In the first letter which is shown, the writer has adopted the wrong tactics to secure an adjustment. The necessity for securing the adjustment has been subordinated to a desire to place the blame entirely upon the firm. Even if the cause is just, letters of this kind are less likely to secure prompt adjustment than are letters which are firm, reasonable, and courteous.

Gentlemen:

I am returning six reams of paper which I received from you yesterday; if you will refer to my order you will find that I specified white paper. The paper you sent was yellow.

My correct order follows:

6 Reams #171 Paper. Color White.

I have already been delayed by this mistake so shall be very glad if you will adjust the matter as promptly as you can.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 37

This is a much more polite letter than its predecessor. It is, however, just as firm. The writer clearly states the fact that he has been delayed by the mistake. He is just as anxious to receive the correct order as was the writer of the former letter.

Because he is more careful in his method he is likely to receive much more efficient results.

The Right Way

In the next illustration we have a letter which illustrates the ideas of courtesy, reasonableness, and force. Because complaints of this kind are reasonable the firms to whom they are written are more likely to make a reasonable adjustment. The aim of the complaint should always be kept in mind; it must not simply complain, it must secure an effective adjustment of unsatisfactory conditions.

Dear Sir:

We have your contract in which you agree to buy this second-hand automobile without any guarantee as to its condition on our part. You realize of course, that this contract is binding in law

Second-hand automobiles are very likely to prove unsatisfactory, because many of the parts are worn and repairs are always higher than on a new car

We do not see how you can have any cause for complaint. We shall insist on enforcing the contract

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 38

The letter written by a business house in answer to a complaint may do one of two things: It may refuse the request or it may grant it.

There is sometimes a chance to answer complaints in an unfavorable manner and yet not lose the good will of the customer. In less frequent cases there is the opportunity of making him satisfied even after he has filed a complaint.

This letter is the wrong type of letter for the business house to pursue, even though it must refuse the request which was asked. Instead of keeping the good will of the customer, it will make him more regretful than ever that he has made his purchase. A dissatisfied customer is a bad advertisement.

LETTERS ADJUSTING COMPLAINTS

The second class of letters is sometimes more difficult to write. Business houses do not always find that complaints are just and well founded. Many times the adjustment desired is unreasonable. Then the double problem of refusing the request and attempting to assuage the injured feelings of the customer must be faced.

Customer Must Not Be Lost The important thing from the viewpoint of the seller is to retain the customer. The letter which simply refuses to adjust the complaint or which even adjusts it in a grudging manner is likely to lose a customer. Courtesy, again, plays an important part. The letter which conveys the impression that the firm is willing to make good even though it is not in the wrong, is a very poor advertisement for any business house to send out. The letter which makes a prompt and reasonable adjustment in a courteous manner, will sometimes strengthen the bonds between the two parties.

Note the letter illustrating the courteous reply. It makes the reader feel that it has been a real pleasure to adjust the complaint. Letters like this are worth dollars in advertising, because they make of a dissatisfied customer a man who has more confidence than ever in the firm. He believes that they are willing to let him be the judge of whether or not he is satisfied.

Customer Must Be Satisfied Notice the difference in the two ways of answering the next complaint. The result is exactly the same in either case. In the first letter, the man keeps the article because the firm refuses to take it back. He is a dissatisfied customer. In the second letter he keeps it because he wants to, and because he is more

Dear Sir:

We don't want you to ask us to allow you to return the car which you bought last week. Many times we have had people buy second-hand cars and then at the first need of repairs they have come to us feeling that they have not received full value for their money.

A good second-hand car will give you excellent service. You purchased this car well under the market price for second-hand motors of its kind. We feel that the few dollars spent by you in repairs will put this car in first class condition. Whatever money you are compelled to spend on the car now, should be considered very much in the nature of an investment.

We sincerely advise you to look over the car very carefully and strengthen any weak points that you may discover. If you will put this car in first class running condition, it will be worth several times what you paid for it.

If we can assist you in fixing this car up, please let us know.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 39

This letter is an answer to the same complaint as No. 38. It shows the possibilities of making a man satisfied with that which he has bought. Even though he may never be entirely satisfied with his purchase, the reasonableness of this letter is likely to make him feel that no injustice has been done. It may even go further; he may keep the car because he feels that he wants it; he may feel that his original decision was correct.

If it succeeds, the firm has made a satisfied customer out of a dissatisfied one. The result is at least worth the effort.

firmly convinced than ever that his original decision was right. The letter is psychologically correct for several reasons. Men are usually open to conviction when it comes to making them believe that their original decision was right. Furthermore, such a letter has the same clinching effect that the recanvass of the salesman has.

Customer Will Appreciate Reasonable Reply

Even though this sort of an adjustment or answer to a complaint does not succeed in convincing the dissatisfied customer that his complaint was unjustified, it does at least go a long way toward making him stand by his original decision with good grace. Even if entirely unsatisfactory to the man, at least it does not injure feelings which are already hurt. The average customer wants only a reasonable adjustment. Any letter which makes him feel that whatever is done is the only reasonable and just thing to do, is more likely to satisfy him than any other.

THE TONE OF THE COMPLAINT LETTER

Mere Politeness Not Courtesy

The question of courtesy is one which is not always well understood. Courtesy does not consist in politeness alone, nor does it consist entirely of sincerity; it consists of both. Just as the smile on a man's face tells whether or not he is really sincere, so does the whole tone of a business letter tell whether or not the words really mean what they say. Effusiveness is not politeness. An obvious attempt at being polite is sometimes lacking in courtesy because the effort is so plainly visible.

Bad Policy To Contradict Customer

If a customer firmly believes that he is right, argument which is intended to convince him otherwise is usually unavailing. Human nature will make a man believe the thing which he wants to believe. Subtle insinuations which are aimed to discredit whatever statements he may have made in his letter of complaint, carry with them a double sting. They not only refuse to grant his request, but they attempt to convince him that he was wrong in asking.

Honesty Always Best

The letter which is not an exemplification of the theory that honesty is the best policy, should never be written. Letters of complaint, or letters in answer to complaints must be truthful, sincere, and courteous. Truth is not difficult to detect. Honesty is always convincing Make the letter stand firmly on its own feet.

Chapter X

MAKING THE DETAIL LETTER SIMPLE

Too Many Letters Are Colorless

In every business office hundreds of letters are written about the general details of the business. Many of these routine letters are written about much the same subject matter. Consequently in a general way they adhere to much the same form.

The danger of writing a great many letters which are much the same in thought is that they may become so stereotyped in style that they will gradually lose all originality. Words and phrases constantly spring up which are used again and again, because at first they seem particularly apt. Constant repetition makes them tiring. They lose their force.

Hackneyed Phrases Are Bad

Constantly used phrases not only lack force, but their use has another disadvantage. Because they are so easily called to mind, there is a constant danger that they will be used when other words would better fit the occasion. As a result of this we find that the number of useless words in business letters is astounding. Words and phrases are used sometimes simply for their rhetorical effect. They detract, not only from the force and the naturalness of a letter, but also in many cases from its clearness.

There are two things to be considered in writing any detail letter. In the first place the writer should be individual. Whatever he has to say should be told and not written. He must always remember that the letter takes the place of the

interview. The language used should be the same as he would use if he were speaking directly to the person.

Arrangement Helps Notice the difference in the letters in regard to the lost freight car. The first letter is too much involved. The writer apparently imagined that he had just so many words to get out, just so much to be said, before he could finish his letter. No attempt was made to arrange his ideas so that the things he did have to say could be said briefly, clearly, and with interest. The second letter conveys just as much information and will bring better results because the writer has taken the pains to present his ideas more clearly and with much greater interest.

Gentlemen:

We have your letter of the 8th inst., inquiring as to the financial responsibility, etc., of Mr. John Harrison, and in reply we are pleased to inform you that for the past seven years he has been one of our most valuable customers, running a credit line of sixty days, ranging from $100,000 to $300,000. He has never had an overdue account, and has sometimes taken the cash discount.

Trusting this information may prove satisfactory to you,

We are,

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 40

This letter used too many words to convey its message. Notice letter No. 41.

Gentlemen:

Mr. John Harrison, about whom you inquired, is one of our most valued customers In the past seven years he has had numerous sixty day accounts ranging from $100,000 to $300,000.

He has never had an overdue account.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 41

This is practically the same letter as No. 40. It has been reduced by simply omitting unnecessary words. The danger is always to become somewhat verbose. The letter writer should conserve his energy by using as few words as he can to convey his message.

Buying Letters Then there is the letter which orders goods. We have already spoken about the buying letter. We have seen how necessary it is to make the description of the articles wanted complete in every way. We have shown that the method of making the shipment and the method of payment must always be included. All of these points must be considered, of course, but in addition to merely including them in the letter, their arrangement must be carefully planned so that unnecessary words will not be used to convey all this information.

Returning Goods Then, too, it must be remembered that when goods are returned by mail the same care in explaining the reason for returning them, and the description of the articles, must always be included. Legally, unless otherwise specified, an order for goods closes the contract, and as soon as goods are paid for they belong to the buyer and he cannot, except at the courtesy of the seller, re-

Gentlemen:

Pursuant to a suggestion of Mr. Albert Long, of the firm of Long, Nichols & Co., St. Louis, Mo., and who is an old and valued friend of ours, we desire to enter into correspondence with your house with reference to future business relations.

At present we are handling principally hardware and groceries; but contemplate an extension of our line, which will embrace much of the various goods handled by your firm.

As to our financial ability and business integrity, we refer you to Messrs. Lucas & Ward, wholesale grocers of your city, and with whom we have had comparatively extensive and satisfactory dealings. The firms from which we have hitherto purchased goods, upon hearing of our intention to increase our facilities, have voluntarily offered us encouragement beyond our expectations, and we trust that after you shall have thoroughly investigated our standing, we may also meet with your generous support and cooperation.

All the indications, in this section of the country, point to a steady increase of trade for the coming year. If the facts, as above set forth, justify your favorable consideration, will you kindly advise us as to terms and prices, making the former as liberal as you possibly can, with due regard for your own business interests.

Thanking you in anticipation of an early and favorable reply, we are,

Yours truly,

turn them for credit or exchange them for other goods. Many business houses are glad to make exchanges because, by extending this courtesy to their customer, they do much to establish their business.

In turn they appreciate a reasonable excuse on the part of the customer for wishing to make the exchange. Mere requests for exchanges, or expressions to the effect that the customer does not want the goods, presume upon the good will of the dealer. If possible, therefore, a sound and logical reason for returning the goods should always be included in a request that goods be exchanged. Even if this reason may not seem important to the customer, it must be remembered that business firms like to know why goods are returned.

In making this exchange, there is always an opportunity for the writer of a letter to demonstrate his ability to condense. He must arrange the material in his letter so that whatever ideas are expressed will not interfere with the real purpose of the letter.

Government Forms Help

In Chapter II we saw the form of a letter used by the Government in its correspondence. This has been carried out by many business corporations in their detail letters. By placing the word "subject," followed by a brief summary of what the letter is about, immediately between the complimentary address and the salutation, the subject of the letter has been made very clear. This has several advantages. When correspondence is filed the subject of the letter can be ascertained

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Specimen Letter No. 42

(See preceding page)

This letter is exceptionally long. The unfortunate part of it is that it is long, not because the matter in the letter requires so many words, but simply because the writer has stated his message in involved phraseology.

without reading it. In the ordinary exchange of correspondence the business man can tell at a glance what the letter is about, because its subject is typed clearly at the top. Note how easy it is to tell the subject of the specimen letter.

AVOIDING THE HACKNEYED PHRASE

Letters Must Be Condensed

The specimen letters in this chapter show the possibilities with regard to actually condensing the ordinary letter. Many letter writers do not realize how high sounding and rhetorical their letters really are. There is always the danger of making a letter too brief and too abrupt. But most letters run to the

Dear Sir:

We recently established a grocery and hardware business in this locality. Mr. Albert Long, of the firm of Long Nickols and Company, suggested that we get your quotations on merchandise.

We refer by permission to Messrs. Lucas and Ward, and Messrs. Edward Duce and Company, who will gladly tell you about our credit and integrity.

Because we are a young firm, we would appreciate as liberal terms as you can offer.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 43

This is a simple, direct statement of the ideas which letter No. 42 attempts to convey. This letter is likely to receive more consideration because it is simply worded, and because it is easily read. Its message is clear, concise and accurate. There can be no doubt as to the business-like quality of the firm which writes it. A business-like letter is bound to receive business-like consideration.

Dear Sir:

We beg to state, in answer to your letter of June 1, that car #234 C., the one in question was shipped April 22, by way of the Santa Fe Railroad and we believe the time of its arrival will not disappoint you, as its route was traceable to within 90 miles of Cincinnati. If you do not receive this car by the 8th inst. let us know and we shall lose no time in recommending judgment against the A. T. & S. F. Ry., at once, for as shipper this is our privilege.

Hoping you will be able to handle this matter in a satisfactory manner to yourself, as well as us, and assuring you that we will be glad to offer our heartiest co-operation,

We are,

Yours sincerely,

Specimen Letter No. 44

The reason that so many letters are so unnecessarily long lies in the fact that they use phrases which are unnecessary, but which have become handy by long use. Take this letter: "We beg to state" is unnecessary. The statement is enough. The phrase "the one in question" is unnecessary, because the car number and the letter in which it was mentioned have both been clearly stated. The abbreviation "inst." is never used in modern correspondence.

The name of the railroad had already been mentioned and the last line in paragraph one is unnecessary. The legal side of the question is obvious. The last paragraph is one long continued participial ending. It has little real thought. The whole letter would be improved by its omission.

other extreme. A letter should be readable regardless of how dry the subject itself is. The principles of writing interesting and human letters should be strictly followed in any kind of letter, whether it is a sales letter or the ordinary detail letter.

Avoid Participial Endings

The participial ending is another thing which has been entirely omitted. In writing the detail letter the stock phrases of which we have already spoken in another chapter are always a hindrance to clearness, conciseness and force. These phrases interfere with brevity. To be brief without being abrupt should be the aim of the modern business correspondent.

Such phrases as the following are entirely unnecessary. In most cases the point will be absolutely clear without them.

As stated above,
We would like to say,
We would like to inquire,
Herewith,
On investigation.

Dear Sir:

We have traced car #234 C. to within 90 miles of Cincinnati. It was shipped April 22, on the Santa Fe.

If you do not receive this car by June 8th, we will commence suit against the railway. We shall expect to hear from you on that date.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 45

This is letter No. 44 in simple form. There is danger, of course, of making specimen letters like this too brief. The possibilities of condensation at least are exemplified. Business-like letters must do away with unnecessary words.

Such hackneyed phrases as the following should also be avoided. Their constant use has made them so stereotyped that they always detract from the originality of a letter.

Beg to advise,
In reply to your letter,
Trusting we may be favored,
We regret to reply,
We take pleasure,
Kindly advise,
By return mail,
We regret to note.

Mr. Spague Townsend
Excelsior, Minnesota

Subject: Main crank shaft bearings.

Dear Sir:

The crank shaft bearings which you ordered are temporarily out of stock. We are expecting a shipment from the factory by Thursday. Your bearings will be shipped by express promptly at that time.

We are sorry that you should be inconvenienced.

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 46

This letter illustrates the practice of the Government form when applied to everyday business correspondence. Notice that the subject of the letter is made very clear by writing the word "Subject," followed by a brief statement of the contents of the letter between the address and the salutation.

In such a small letter as this, it is really unnecessary, perhaps, but in long letters there is the double advantage of being able to tell the contents of the letter without reading it, and also of having the subject of the letter readily available in case the letter should be filed.

The reader will readily appreciate the many ways in which the same idea can be expressed more simply, more directly, and more humanly. The word "advise" should be particularly avoided. Advise is too often used with a meaning which is not its own. If the writer of a letter means by the expression, "please advise me," "please tell me about this," he should use the latter expression.

"Beg" is another word which is much misused. The business man does not have to beg. If it is necessary for him to ask a question, he should ask it directly without formal introduction and without apology. The combination of these two words "beg" and "advise" should be especially avoided, because each word is used in a wrong sense. The direct way is the efficient way. A business letter's efficiency will be judged by its directness. Avoid the roundabout way.

Making Inclosures It is not absolutely necessary to mention inclosures except in the body of a letter. Some writers prefer to note all inclosures in the lower left-hand corner of the page, below the initials of the dictator. This is usually done by writing the figure representing the number of inclosed checks or papers immediately after the abbreviation, thus:

Incl. 2

Sometimes the order is reversed, as:

2 incl.

Inclosure may be spelled enclosure. The abbreviation is also written "inc." or "enc."

WRITING TELEGRAMS

Writing Telegrams There are a number of precautions that should always be taken in writing telegrams. Many times the responsibility of writing telegrams is placed entirely upon the stenographer. Telegrams are expensive. Not only must the message be clearly conveyed in the fewest words possible, but also must the return wire be taken into consideration. Unless absolutely necessary, a telegram should be worded so that an answer need not be sent.

The Alternative Telegram This can usually be done by writing what is known as the Alternative Telegram. This means that a certain situation will be implied if no answer is forthcoming. Silence on the part of the receiver of a telegram can just as well be construed as a reply as not.

To illustrate: Suppose that a salesmanager wanted to know whether a salesman who was on the road intended to go to Chicago or St. Louis first. Let us suppose that the salesman in question alone knew which city it would be advisable to visit first. The salesmanager could not tell him definitely to go to either one.

This would be a poor telegram:

Wire whether you go to St. Louis or Chicago first.

This telegram makes a reply necessary, no matter what the intention of the salesman is.

This would be better:

Wire if you go to Chicago before St. Louis.

Both telegrams could be sent at the ten-word rate, but the second one would save a reply in case the salesman intended to go to St. Louis first. This is what is meant by the Alternative Telegram. Many dollars would be saved annually if all unnecessary wires could be eliminated.

Take another example. Suppose a man had ordered some goods for which he was in a great hurry. If the goods had not been shipped he had decided to purchase elsewhere enough to last him for a few days. The natural thing would be to telegraph something like this:

Have my goods been shipped? Wire.

An answer of some kind would have to be sent. A telegram which might save a reply would be this one:

Wire if my goods have not been shipped.

Avoid Ambiguity

A situation like the above offers a special opening for the ambiguous telegram. Because there is the constant effort on the part of the writer to condense, many telegrams are written which not only have two possible meanings, but which leave the reader in doubt as to which meaning is really intended.

If the writer of the above telegram had desired to save a reply if possible, but had said:

Wire me if my goods have been shipped.

the telegram would have been ambiguous. The word "if" might have meant "whether" to the reader. The wire would then have meant this:

Wire me whether my goods have been shipped.

The shipper would have immediately sent either a negative or an affirmative reply at once. Careless mistakes like this are costly, and are inexcusable. Every telegram should be a thoughtful composition, and the question of results, as in the letter, should always be the final test.

Telegrams like these are also likely to be misinterpreted:

Don't come. Too late.
Wire if the goods are ready.
Let him know if his shares are sold.

An error in punctuation—omitting the period in the first telegram would entirely change the meaning. "If" is always easily confused with "whether." The second telegram would therefore be improved by a more definite statement. Pronouns, such has "him" and "his" are always likely to be misunderstood. Because the telegram can contain few antecedents, names such as "Jones" or "Smith" should be used instead of indefinite pronouns. The third telegram would be much more definite if this had been done.

Condensed But Clear

The message in any telegram should never be so condensed that it is not clear. Because telegrams can be sent at a ten-word minimum rate is no reason that clearness should be sacrificed just to save a few cents. On the other hand, the wire which requires twenty words to express a ten-word message is just as extravagant. The principles of condensation should always be followed. Be concise, but always be clear.

Efficiency The Aim in View

The simplest letter should be written in the most efficient manner. The principles of good letter writing should apply to all letters. There should not be two forms. The good letter writer will not write two kinds of letters. He will not write an ordinary letter for every day use and a "dressed up" letter for special occasions. Every letter should be worthy of his signature.

Chapter XI

THE FRIENDLY LETTER

Business Quality Most Important

The friendly business letter must not be confused with the friendly letter of social correspondence. The fact that a business letter is written between friends should not detract from its businesslike qualities. The failure of those who try to write a friendly business letter is due to the fact that their letters contain very little of a really business nature. The fundamental object of a business letter is to transact business. Its friendly qualities must not interfere with its efficiency as a business letter.

Friendly Part Must Be Sincere

It is the personal element which makes a letter friendly. Letters which are too stiff and formal, even though written between friends, sometimes lack this personal element. Little personal paragraphs which call up some friendly incident without seriously interfering with the business at hand may be properly included. Whatever is said should be sincerely friendly and not put in for effect.

On the other hand, there is the danger of making a letter so friendly that the business matter is relegated to the sidelines. The business part of the letter must be kept well in the foreground. The tone of the friendly letter can be accomplished with few words. These few words must never interfere with the matter of business, nor must they have the appearance of being merely tacked on to gain a friendly effect.

Irrelevant Matter Interferes

Most business correspondence is filed. No business man cares to have his files littered with unnecessary matter. If a letter contains important business and, in addition, contains a great deal of irrelevant matter supposedly of a friendly nature, its value for reference purposes is considerably lessened. Every business letter should be so written that its subject matter can be readily ascertained. Friendly letters which are too friendly are likely to be incoherent. They are not business-like.

FRIENDLY ADVERTISING LETTERS

Cheap advertising letters have made capital out of the idea of a friendly business letter. Many of these advertisers have used form letters which were written in a strictly friendly tone to absolute strangers. These letters are cheapening. They

Dear Frank:

I think I have in mind a piece of property that will interest you.

The Pierce Atwater property is for sale. Ever since you told me about wishing to locate in town I have been looking around very carefully. This property is a bargain.

It will be useless for me to try to describe it but I think it would be worth a trip down here. If you think it would be of interest to you, wire me, and I will secure an option.

Yours Sincerely,

Specimen Letter No. 47

Even friendly letters can be condensed. Because a letter is friendly is no sign that it should not be business-like. This letter written between friends is straight-forward, business-like and brief.

cannot be truly sincere. Business letters cannot presume upon the friendship of their readers. They are more likely to make friends by being straightforward and sincere.

Do Not Capitalize Friendship

Another cheap form of letter is the letter which is written in a strictly friendly tone between mere acquaintances. No one cares to have his friendship capitalized. No one cares to be showered with various sorts of investment propositions by men who are simply passing acquaintances. In short, the friendly letter to be a success must be absolutely sincere. If it is sincere it is not likely that the friendly portion will interfere with its efficiency as judged by the standard of any other business letter.

Dear Mr. Smith:

Last Wednesday we were talking about the possibility of arranging a game between our Y. M. C. A. and your Military Academy.

We would like to come down on Saturday, the 10th of June. Our expenses for the trip would amount to about $50. What guarantee could you make us?

I think that a game between the two teams would be a good drawing card. Our men are all in good shape and feel that they can put up a good scrap against your basket tossers.

Will you let me know by Wednesday what you can guarantee us?

Yours truly,

Specimen Letter No. 48

This letter is of the more informal type of friendly letter. It calls attention to a friendly conversation and yet in the same sentence gets down to the brass tacks of the business which it has in mind.

The problem of making a letter really friendly and still having it truly business-like is difficult, but it must be remembered that the business side is much more important than its friendly phase. The so-called friendly matter which is merely tacked on to the letter does a great deal to detract from its value.

Dear Mr. Grow:

Dr. Atkinson told me that you expected to go to the mountains the last of this week.

I wonder if I could persuade you to locate a cabin site for me, somewhere near the place where we camped last summer? I certainly think that that is the finest spot in the whole country. Any site that will pass your inspection will certainly be satisfactory to me.

I will gladly pay you for any inconvenience that you may experience on my behalf.

Cordially,

Specimen Letter No. 49

Of a still more friendly character is this letter. Yet few words are used which could at all be construed as unnecessary. The letter as a whole has a distinctly friendly tone, and yet as a business letter it would bring results.

Chapter XII

WHY STUDY CORRESPONDENCE?

Your pay check depends upon what you can do. If you can turn out a hundred dollars' worth of work, your salary will adjust itself to that amount of money. If you are only doing fifty dollars' worth of work—if that is all you can actually earn—that is all the money you should expect to receive.

Why study business correspondence? Because a stenographer's ability is not only dependent upon the speed and accuracy of taking and transcribing notes, but also upon that illusive quality known as initiative—the ability to do things wthout being told to do them. If you can create letters instead of merely typing them, you are no longer in the mechanical, machine-like stenographer class.

Your position as secretary or stenographer is peculiar. You can make your services as valuable to your employer as you choose. You can add to his work or you can relieve him of much. The most certain thing in the world is this: Just as surely as you can increase the amount of work which you can take from his hands, just in this proportion is your value, stated in dollars and cents, likely to rise.

Why study business correspondence? Because dictated letters require a great amount of effort. The subject of the average letter can usually be *said* in one sentence. If you have the ability as a stenographer to write some of your employer's letters, to create them yourself, you have made yourself a valuable factor in his office.

Why study business correspondence? Because you cannot write a good letter unless you can think. Not only must you think, but you must think well. If the study of business correspondence has made you think, it has taught you something which you can apply not only to one particular phase of your profession, but to everything that you do.

Why learn to write a sales letter? Because ninety per cent of the positions in the world depend upon the success of selling some commodity or service. Unless one works for the Government or for the schools and similar institutions which are under the control of the Government, your position will depend upon a sale. Why write a sales letter? Because the cost of selling anything has gradually risen. The cost of selling a well-known $1500 automobile was recently given as approximately one-half of the selling price of the car. Reduce the cost of selling anything and you can reduce its price.

The sales letter is a low-priced salesman if it succeeds. You can well afford to put time, energy and thought into a sales letter because if it succeeds, its return in dollars and cents is far greater than its cost. If you can write successful sales letters, you are a producer.

You can't be a successful and efficient producer unless you think. The war has brought home to us the significant fact that efficiency must be the keynote of all business. Delays have always been expensive, but we are learning today that it is not the quick enough method that is worth very much, it is the quickest that really counts.

Then, of course, speed and accuracy must go hand in hand; nothing is ever well done or quickly done which is not done accurately. Efficiency simply means getting the best results with the least effort. A careful plan and speedy and accurate prosecution of the plan are equally important.

Even words must not be wasted. The value of being compelled to write a letter, of being made to form that letter in your mind before putting it on paper is a value which doesn't stop right there. The ability to express oneself is becoming more and more appreciated. The lack of that ability is becoming more and more inexcusable.

Why do employers lay so much emphasis on the letter of application? Because your ability as a thinker and workman can be seen in your letters. Are you willing to be judged by your letters?

If the study of correspondence has taught you any one of these things it has succeeded. Do you think it has?

List of
Specimen Letters

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